Jno. Jas. THE Smith

BLIND OBEDIENCE

Supplem OF AN ber the 23rd 1774

HUMBLE PENITENT.

THE

Best Cure for Scruples.

M. DC. XC. IX.

Second Edition. Revis'd.

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John TO THE Smith

READER.

his Book.

SCrupulosity is a Disease of the Mind, which many people have more or less of; although few believe it, and fewer are willing to own it. The greatest part, and the wisest, are commonly asham'd of it. But yet there are some (the fewer, the better) who think it a fine thing to be longer than ordinary, in consulting, in preparing, and confessing. The more they out-do their neighbours in these matters, and the more they are taken no-

tice of for being ſingular, ſo much more they admire themſelves for being skilful, careful, and exact. They ſeem to affect theſe tedious and tormenting Scrupuloſities, as if they thought them to be the Modiſh Diſtemper of the Saints: And, if one may judge by appearances, they are like a certain Lady, who having entertain'd the company with a long hiſtory of her Vapours, could not endure to hear a Gentlewoman, inferior to her ſelf, begin to complain of the ſame indiſpoſition. Marry come up, *ſays her Ladyſhip*, we ſhall have every body, one of

18 55 MAY

of these days, take upon them to be troubled with Vapours, if such as you pretend to it.

'Tis hard to determine which is greater, the Folly or the Mischief of Scrupulosity. Take it one way, there is no subject more serious: take it the other, there is nothing more ridiculous. My chief design is to prevent the Mischief of it, without sparing the Folly, when it happens to lie in my way. And truly, when people are so fond of their Scruples, I am apt to think, it is not amiss to let them see how silly the humour is.

To the Reader.

There is always a ſecret Pride lies lurking in the bottom, when they are ſo ſtiff in their opinion; and a little ſenſe of ſhame is in ſome meaſure a remedy for it. If on always treat theſe follies with reſpect and gravity, it will only ſerve to confirm them in a vain belief, that their miſtakes are wiſe ones: And this being wiſe in their own conceits *is the chief part of their Diſeaſe.*

In fine, well or ill, I have now done Scribling: And, upon ſecond thoughts, am in ſome admiration how I ever prevail'd with my ſelf, to begin. But, being once enter'd,

*enter'd, and having already publiſh'd * ſome ſmall Pieces, I was not willing to leave off, till I had made a preſent of this little Treatiſe to my Friends; to whom if it prove acceptable and uſeful, I ſhall not think my labour loſt: And, for the reſt, the care is taken.*

Mean time I keep my name to my ſelf: And my reaſon is, becauſe I love a quiet life. I ever lookt upon it as the greateſt bleſſing which a bad World can afford: and am perſwaded that being

* *A Contrite and Humble Heart: Three Sermons upon the Sacrament: A Letter concerning the Council of Trent:* &c.

being Private is the easiest and securest way of being Quiet. Besides, I see no good there is in being talkt of; either well, or ill: The one is good for nothing but to make a man Vain; the other is as apt to make him Vext; and All to no purpose.

THE

THE CONTENTS.

Chap. I. *The Character of Blind Obedience, and of Scrupulosity which is humble and submissive.* pag. 1

Chap. II. *The true Causes of proud and wilful Scrupulosity.* 6

Chap. III. *The extravagant Effects of Scrupulosity, when it is proud and wilful.* 9

§. 1. *The extravagancy of their Curiosity.* 10

§. 2. *The extravagancy of their Examens.* 18

§. 3. *The extravagancy of their Fears.* 22

Chap. IV. *The pernicious Consequences of the same Scrupulosity.* 25

§. 1.

§. 1. *The difference betwixt Servile Fear, and Loving Confidence.* 28
§. 2. *The mischief of long Examens.* 32
§. 3. *Blind Obedience the best Remedy.* 39
Chap. V. *Nothing more unreasonable than a boundless Liberty of reasoning.* 42
Chap. VI. *The difference betwixt a Philosopher and a Christian, concerning the Submission of Humane Reason.* 50
Chap. VII. *The different Sentiments of a Proud and an Humble Penitent, Concerning Blind Obedience.* 53
Chap. VIII. *A Scripture-Objection answer'd.* 61
Chap. IX. *Pretences of Reason answer'd.* 66

Chap.

Chap. X. *Pretences of Conſcience conſider'd.* 83
§. 1. *The two ſorts of Practical Certainty explain'd.* 88
§. 2. *When we rely upon our Confeſſor's Authority, our Certainty is Abſolute.* 90
§. 3. *When we depend upon the Probability of our own Reaſon, our Certainty is only Conditional.* 103
§. 4. *Objections of pretended Conſcience anſwer'd.* 120
Chap. XI. *The Security of Blind Obedience proved by Scripture.* 133
Chap. XII. *Maxims of S.* Bernard *concerning Blind Obedience.* 147.

Max.

Max. I. *We ought to look upon our Confessor as a Vicegerent of God, without considering his faults.* 149

Max. II. *We ought to look upon him as our Judge, without examining his reasons.* 160

APPROBATION.

I Have read this learned Treatise, concerning *Blind Obedience*, which I judge very useful; and observed nothing in it, but solid and Orthodox. *Dat. Lovanij. 17. Aprilis.* 1698.

FRANCIS MARTIN.
Doctor and Royal Professor of Divinity in the University of Lovain.

THE

THE BLIND *OBEDIENCE* OF AN HUMBLE *PENITENT.*

CHAP. I.

The Character of Blind Obedience, and of Scrupulosity which is Humble and Submissive.

BLind Obedience is an ill name which the World has given to one of the best things in it. I do not call it so, because I think it is so; but because the custom of speaking will have it so, and many

people will not understand me if I use another term for it. However I shall endeavour to do it so much justice, as to shew plainly in a familiar example, that so good a thing does not deserve so bad a name.

Let us suppose two Travellers in the same way to the same home, and that their lives and fortunes depend upon their coming timely thither. The one goes slowly on, and oftentimes stands still to satisfie his curiosity, either in looking back to take a prospect of the Country which he leaves behind him, or else in studying whether the foot-way on the right hand or the left be better than the way he's in: Whilest he is thus amused with idle fancies, time runs on, the day is spent, he is benighted before he is aware, and begins to repent when 'tis too late. His fellow-traveller considers that all these vain amusements are nothing

13 55 MAY

thing to his purpoſe, he is full of concern for the great affair he has in hand, and therefore he marches diligently on; minds carefully the way before him, and never ſtops to look behind, or gaze about him. Will any body ſay, this man is blind, becauſe he does not ſee backward? or becauſe he does not ſtare about him, on the one ſide, or the other? All his buſineſs is to go forward, he ſees the way before him as well as any man living, he ſees all that he has need to ſee; and therefore, whoſoever ſays this man is blind, muſt excuſe me if I cannot believe it.

The Caſe of theſe two Travellers is dayly verified in ſcrupulous perſons, of which there are two ſorts: the one proud and willful, the other humble and ſubmiſſive. Thoſe rely upon themſelves, and theſe upon their Guide. Thoſe always are diſturb'd with idle doubts and fears which are

not worth a ſerious thought: Theſe never trouble their heads with any thing but their chief buſineſs, which is to march diligently on, for fear of coming late; they never ſtop to look backward, for fear of having dropt ſomething behind them; they never ſtand ſtill to obſerve the different paths on either ſide of the road; they carefully obſerve the ſure direction of their Guide, and, without diſputing the matter with him, are contented to follow whereſoe're he leads. This is the true character of the Obedience I ſpeak of: It is always ready to march at firſt word of command; it never pauſes to gaze behind it, or on either ſide; it clearly ſees the way which it is bid to take, and never perplexes it ſelf with any doubts about it, becauſe it is ſelf-evident there can be no other way for true Obedience. What a ſpiteful thing it is, to ſay, that this Obedience is *blind*, when it

ſees

ſees its way ſo *clearly*, and is ſo *certain* of it!

This humble and ſubmiſſive Scrupuloſity is rather to be envied, than be pitied. To theſe there is no need of preaching Blind Obedience. They are very well acquainted with it: 'tis their daily practice, and perpetual comfort: 'tis by this they overcome their doubts and fears; and though they are not quite ſo eaſy as they would be, yet they are contented and reſign'd. Their Scrupuloſity though ſometimes painful, is always advantagious to them: the experience of their weakneſs humbles them, and fortifies them in the practice of Obedience, it not only puts them in the way to Heaven, but it helps to keep them in it; and therefore I have no more to ſay to them at preſent, but only to wiſh them a good journey. The proud and wilful Sinners are the perſons, I have now to deal with: Thoſe Sin-

ners who are not contented to be Saints *according to God's heart*, but *must* and *will* be *Saints* according to their *own*.

CHAP. II.

The true Causes of proud and wilful Scrupulosity.

OUr Doctors and Divines, who treat of Scruples, observe several causes of them: 1. Melancholy, which is sometimes cured by Physick: 2. Suggestion of the Devil, against whom the best defence is Prayer: 3. Conversation of Scrupulous persons, whose needless discourses of their inward troubles, ought to be shunn'd as infectious: 4. Reading of casuistical Books, which are to be avoided as remedies unfit for the disease: 5. Excess of servile fear, which dayly diminishes as the Love of God encreases. These are the Causes which they

they commonly take notice of; but they are nothing to my present purpose: because a complication of them all together, may consist with being humble and submissive.

The true and proper Causes of our being proud and wilful in our Scruples, are the Esteem of our Judgment, and the Love of our Liberty, which we derive originally from the Sin of our first Parents. We are curious of *knowing good and evil*: we are ambitious of *being like the Highest*: we are desirous of being absolute and independent in all our thoughts and actions: we would willingly be uncontrollable in both: we would fain do what we think, and think what we please: in a word, we would gladly chuse our own way, and be our own Judges whether we have chosen right or wrong.

'Tis obvious to every body's natural reason, that Scrupulous

perſons would never be proud, if they had not an eſteem of their judgment; neither would they be wilful in their Scruples, if they did not love the liberty of their humour. They eſteem their judgment, and are therefore ſo proud they cannot endure to ſubmit it: they love their humour, and therefore are ſo wilful, they cannot abide to croſs it. To abate this love, and to correct this vain eſteem, I know nothing more proper than to expoſe the folly and the miſcheif which attend them: and therefore ſhall endeavour in the two following Chapters to ſhew the extravagant effects, and the pernicious conſequences of them.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The extravagant Effects of Scrupulosity when it is Proud and Wilful.

'Tis no wonder that humane Reason is extravagant, when Scrupulosity on the one side, and obstinacy on the other, conspire together to confound the notions of it. The one frights it out of the way; the other hinders it from coming in again: The one warps it; the other makes it stand bent: And how is't possible for any body to square their actions by such a crooked Rule. All that I wonder at, is this; that when people find, and feel by sad experience, the folly and extravagancy of their following such a Rule, they are yet so proud and wilful as not to make use of a better, which God himself has recommended to them.

There are such a vast variety of follies and excesses which their pride and wilfulness betray them to, that I should never make an end, if I pretended to take notice of them all: and therefore, to bring my matters into as little compass as may be, and to make them as plain and self-evident as I can, I shall reduce them to three general heads, by considering the principal duties of Temperance, and by comparing that of the Body with the other of the Mind, which has most need of it, and suffers most for want of it.

SECT. I.

The extravagancy of their Curiosity.

THe first and least degree of Temperance obliges us to abstain from all those things, which in the common opinion of the world are poyson to us, and

and will certainly deſtroy us. A man muſt needs be very intemperate indeed, who longs for a belly-full of Arſenick, as much as a child does for a lump of Sugar. Would you not think a man ſtrangely wilful, who will not believe 'tis poyſon, till he has tried it? Such is the folly of many ſcrupulous penitents, who long to know ſome ſecret truths, which if they knew for certain, the very certainty would be enough to ruine them. They fright themſelves almoſt out of their wits with thinking, that their Confeſſions never are exact, that they never love God above all things, that they never do ſufficient penance for their ſins, that they are not in the State of Grace, and that they are not in the number of God's Elect. How happy ſhould they be, in caſe they did but know aſſuredly the truth of theſe important matters! If they knew only theſe two things, 1. That they

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are at preſent in God's favour, 2. that they always ſhall be ſo, How cheerfully and unconcern'dly would they then march forward in the way to Heaven!

I confeſs, they have all the reaſon in the world to wiſh theſe things were true: Their Eternal happineſs or miſery depend entirely upon the truth of them: But, ſince they may be true, without their knowledge, 'tis evidently unneceſſary to know it, and unreaſonable to be ſo eager for the aſſurance of it. Alas! all this is nothing but the weakneſs and faint-heartedneſs of an infirm and cowardly Spirit, which makes them over-covetous of their ſecurity: a Security which would eternally undo them, if they had it. They are terribly afraid: this Fear makes them very uneaſy: and this Uneaſineſs creates an earneſt deſire of an imaginary Certainty, which may exempt them from all fear, and make them be

at

at eaſe. In this proceeding there is great appearance of Humour, but not one jot of Reaſon: and becauſe they are ſuch great pretenders to reaſon, I ſhall take the pains to prove that nothing can be more unreaſonable.

I. 'Tis impoſſible for any body to deſire ſincerely the Salvation of their Soul, without deſiring at the ſame time to comply with all thoſe duties, which are requiſite to ſave it. One of theſe duties is Fear: we are commanded to (a) *work our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*: How then can they pretend to go to *work* without it?

II. 'Tis certainly a fooliſh thing to avoid one miſchief, by incurring another equal to it. A wiſe man, if he were obliged to paſs 'twixt fire and water, would be ſure to mind the middle way: he would neither burn himſelf for fear of drowning, nor drown him-

(a) *Philip.* 2. 12.

himſelf for fear of burning. This is the preſent caſe. The way to Heaven is the middle-way betwixt Preſumption and Deſpair: two dreadful precipices which deſcend as low as Hell. To ſave us from falling on either ſide, the way is fenc'd with Hope and Fear: Hope, that we may not deſpair, Fear, that we may not preſume. The blood of our veins, and breath of our noſtrils, are not more requiſite for the life of our Bodies, than Hope and Fear are neceſſary for the ſaving of our Souls: How then can they imagine that 'tis reaſonable, to deſire to be exempt from either?

III. The only true Security which can be expected in this world, is that which is grounded upon Fear. 'Tis Fear that makes us humble and diligent. By making us humble, it prepares us for the grace of God; (*b*) *He gives* his *grace to the humble*: and by ma-

(*b*) 1 *Pet.* 5. 5.

making us diligent in complying with his grace, it helps us to ſecure our Salvation; (*c*) *Uſe diligence*, ſays the Apoſtle, *to make your calling and election ſure.* Beſides, 'tis Fear that makes us (*d*) *watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.* By *watching* we put our ſelves upon a cloſe guard, and by *praying* we obtain the aſſiſtance of Heaven againſt all our enemies on earth. When (*e*) *our Enemy the Devil goes about like a roaring Lion, ſeeking to devour us*, an unconcern'd aſſurance is apt to lull us aſleep: There's nothing like Fear, to make us watchful. (*f*) *O God incline unto my aid; O Lord, make haſt to help me.* A man, who is afraid, will ſay this prayer heartily: but he, who thinks himſelf in ſafety, will either ſay it very tepidly, or not at all. To conclude in a few words; *Watching* and *Praying* are our

(c) 2 *Pet.* 1. 10. (d) *Math.* 26. 41.
(e) 1 *Pet.* 5. 8. (f) *Pſal.* 69. 1.

our beſt *Security*: *Fear* is the beſt thing in the world, to make us *watch* and *pray*: And therefore, they who are ſo fond of being *Secure*, How can they think of wiſhing to be *free from Fear*?

IV. The *Fanaticks* pretend to the very ſame aſſurance, which our Scrupulous people are ſo fond of: and Experience plainly teaches, that it only ſerves to make them proud and negligent. When once they are deluded with a ſtrong perſwaſion that they are God's Favourites, They take no further care: *The Lambs of the Lord may play what tricks they pleaſe.* If this be the effect of unconcern'd Security; if it poyſon and ruine the Soul; what reaſon can any body have to wiſh for it?

V. As long as the Devil is not dead, and as long as this ſinful fleſh of ours is living in a wicked world; ſo long it is impoſſible for us to be free from three

implacable enemies, the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil. Heaven is the only place of Peace, ſuch as excludes all war, all danger, and all fear: (g) *Upon Earth our life is a* continual *Warfare*: and every body knows very well, there can be no *War* without danger, nor *Danger* without juſt reaſon to *fear*. A true Security of being Happy, without any fear of being otherwiſe, is undoubtedly a very lovely thing; and Heaven it ſelf is lovely, for the very ſake of it. I do not wonder that good people are in love with it: and that they long to be in Heaven, to enjoy it. But to wiſh to have it, where we know it is not to be had, is an extravagancy which I never can ſufficiently admire.

SECT.

(g) *Job.* 7. 1.

SECT. II.

The extravagancy of their Examens.

THe ſecond degree of Temperance obliges us, not only to abſtain from poyſon, but alſo from all exceſs in ſuch meats and drinks as are good and neceſſary for us: and the reaſon is clear; becauſe although they are good, if moderately taken, yet every great exceſs is hurtful, and next door to poyſon. Let a man be never ſo temperate in the choice of his diet: though he be never ſo cautious in conſulting his Phyſician concerning the *quality* of it; yet, if he exceed in the *quantity*, if he eat all day and drink all night, he is certainly guilty of a very notorious intemperance.

This

This is the caſe of thoſe Scrupulous Penitents, who are too proud to ſubmit their judgment, and too wilful to croſs their humour. To examine their Conſcience, is a very good thing, and neceſſary for the health of their Soul: but yet there's moderation in all things; and 'tis an unpardonable extravagancy to ſpend the greateſt part of day and night, in ſpelling upon ſins and circumſtances, and putting them together. If it were only ſo much precious time ſo idly ſpent, they would be more excuſable: but to employ their time ſo buſily, not only to do themſelves no good, but even to do themſelves a great deal of harm, is a folly which I take to be matchleſs. They torment themſelves continually: they neglect all other duties, they bring a publick Scandal upon the very character of Devotion: and all this to no purpoſe, but only to try to pacify the fears of a cowardly Spirit,

rit, which has no reaſon in the world to be ſo fearful, but becauſe it wants a little courage to be quiet.

I muſt needs own, that when people are ready to ſink under the the weight of their uneaſineſs, 'tis natural to ſeek for comfort; but however 'tis not rational to ſeek it where Experience proves it is not to be found. They cannot eaſily ſubmit their judgment to their Confeſſor; and therefore in all their doubts they labour to ſuppreſs their fears, by ſatisfying their own Reaſon about them: But the more they range in the Wood, the more they confound and loſe themſelves. They can neither endure the thought of danger, nor the ſenſe of fear; and therefore, though they really believe it is to little purpoſe, yet they ſtill are tempted to go on, and eaſily yield to the temptation. If experience did not teach them that they try in vain, they might

have ſome plea for their practiſe: but to examine barely for examen ſake, is a groundleſs fancy without the leaſt colour of reaſon; and looks (if I may borrow the Wit of a pleaſant modern Poet.)

As if Confeſſion *had catcht*
The Itch, on purpoſe to be ſcratcht;
OR
As if Confeſſion *were intended,*
For nothing elſe, but to be mended.

They think that if they examine no longer, they ſhall be mightily diſturb'd in mind; and they always find, that the longer they examine, the more they are diſturb'd. They trouble themſelves for fear of being troubled: and by their wilful diſobedience, in this very point, they loſe God's favour, for fear of loſing it. An extravagancy much like that, which the Poet deſcribes, of one *Fannius*, who took the pains to kill himſelf, for fear his Enemy ſhould

ſhould ſave him the labour, and do it for him. *(h)*

He fled from death, and kill'd himſelf in flying:
What madneſs is't, to die for fear of dying?

SECT. III.

The Extravagancy of their Fears.

WHereas the Duties of Temperance extend themſelves alike to all particular matters which regard our health, and conſequently oblige us to obſerve a proportionable equality and regularity in all our meaſures: On the contrary, theſe proud Penitents are unequal and irregular in every thing. They are terribly fearful, where they need not fear; and

(h) Hoſtem dum fugeret, ſe *Fannius* ipſe peremit: Dic mihi, quis furor eſt, ne moriare, mori?

and where there is moſt danger, they are leaſt concern'd for't. Exceſſively ſollicitous in the Examen of their Conſciences; and ſupinely careleſs in the Amendment of their lives.

They are frighted into a dreadful apprehenſion of ſome trifles, which are little or nothing to their purpoſe; and whilſt they are ſo ſtedfaſtly attentive to theſe needleſs points, they are inſenſible and ſtupid as to all things elſe. They *will* be their own *Guides* and by God's juſt judgment upon them, they are *blind* ones. They are like the *blind Guides* in the Goſpel, (*i*) *who ſtrein at a gnat, and ſwallow a Camel.* They ſtartle at every inconſiderable difficulty invented by their own imagination; and, in things of great importance, go on as boldly and as unconcern'dly as if they did not ſee Hell gaping under their feet. Their ſtomach riſes at the very

(i) *Math.* 23, 24.

very thought of resigning their judgment in doubtful cases; and in things which are undoubtedly hurtful, even to the degree of poysonous, they sit down to them with a very good appetite. All the Severities of exteriour mortification, as watchings, fastings, hair-cloths, and the like, are commonly welcome to them: because they are well enough pleased with any thing that feeds their pride, and helps them to a false perswasion of their being in the high road of the Saints. These things they'l practise, even when their Confessor forbids them. But, as for the (*k*) *renewing of their Spirit* and *their Mind*, the best and most important mortification, which is that of the Soul, by crossing of their humour and submitting of their judgment, They hate the very thought of it: Not a word of that; as you love them.

(*k*) *Ephes.* 4. 23.

them. If all this be not extravagant, Pray tell me, What is?

CHAP. IV.

The pernicious Conſequences of the ſame Scrupuloſity.

IF people might play the fool, as they pleaſe, in the way to Heaven, without being ever the worſe for it: then indeed the Scrupuloſity, I ſpeak of, would be an innocent ſort of Folly, without any Miſchief in it. But ſurely, if what we believe of Heaven and Hell be true, there can be nothing more pernicious and more fatal to us, than that ſturdy and reſty Scrupuloſity, which will neither lead nor drive, but will be always either ſtanding ſtill, or looking backwards, to obſerve the way behind it. At this rate of going to Heaven, How is it poſſible for us ever to get thither?

S. *Paul* compares the way to Heaven, to the running of a race, in which we ſtrive to win the prize of everlaſting Glory. Conſider only what a diſadvantage it is for a man to look behind him all the way he runs. Without queſtion he who looks before him, advances with much more eaſe, much greater ſpeed, and much leſs danger: whereas he who looks behind him, muſt needs move very ſlowly and uneaſily, beſides being expoſed every moment to a double danger, either of falling, or of miſſing his way. If theſe people thought the way to Heaven eaſy, they would not be ſo much afraid as they are: and, if they think it hard to find, why are they always gazing backwards? The way lies before them; and looking forward is the ſureſt way to find it.

Our

Our Saviour bids us (*l*) *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate: for many will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* We muſt *ſtrive to enter*: We muſt not loſe time: we muſt make what haſt we can: and how can we make haſt, if we are always looking behind us? Beſides, the *Gate* is *ſtrait*: If it were wide enough, one might hit it without aiming at it: but, being ſo *ſtrait* as it is, if we are always looking behind us, 'tis impoſſible to hit it. And therefore 'tis no wonder that our Saviour adds, *Many will ſtrive to enter in, and ſhall not be able*: becauſe many will be always puzzling their brains with making, or mending, their general confeſſions; and always looking whence they come, without minding whither they go.

(*l*) *Luk.* 13. 24.

SECT. I.

The difference betwixt Servile Fear and Loving Confidence.

ONe of the principal causes from whence this great disorder proceeds, is (*m*) *an excess of servile Fear*; and 'tis a thousand pities they are so much over-power'd with it. 'Tis true; *Fear* is good; and 'tis (*n*) *the beginning of wisdom*: But what is the Beginning good for, if it never bring them to the End? (*o*) *The end of the Law is Love.* When servile-Fear is grown to a very great excess, 'tis like the winter-season of the Soul; 'tis a certain chil-

(m) Nimius timor servilis, quem generat nimius amor proprius, quemque diminuit perfecta charitas, ex qua & ex timore filiali raro nascitur hæc affectio. *Suarez.* 1. 2. disp. 12. sect. ult. n. 1. (n) *Psal.* 110. 10. (o) 1 *Tim.* 1. 5.

chillineſs of Love, which makes them quake and tremble, whether they will or no. If they had but time to breath a while; if they had any reſpite to conſider the Divine Goodneſs; if their continual fears would give them leaſure to (*p*) *taſt and ſee how ſweet God is*; the *Love* of him would ſoon improve in their hearts; it would be like the Sun's approaching nigher their Meridian; it would warm them, quicken them, and drive away the chilly coldneſs of their *Fear*.

True Friendſhip naturally inſpires a loving Confidence in our Friend. The more we love him, the more we confide in him. And if we love him very much, we are apt to have ſo much confidence in him, as to think it almoſt impoſſible for him to find in his heart to hurt us. If this be ſo, even amongſt us mortals, notwithſtanding our ill nature and our be-

(p) *Pſal.* 39. 9.

ing ſubject to miſtake, ſurely the ſelf-ſame reaſon is of much more force, when 'tis applied to God. Our friends on earth may be miſtaken, and ſuſpect our love; or elſe may poſſibly be ſo ill natur'd as to ſlight it, though they know it. But our God can neither be ill natur'd to us, nor miſtaken in us: If we love him, we may be aſſured, he always knows it, and he never ſlights it.

'Tis S. *Auſtin*'s Maxim: *Love, and do what you will.* Do but *love* God, and whatever you *do*, under the direction and influence of this Love, will never diſturb your peace. Do but *love* him heartily, and then you will never purpoſely and deliberately deſign to offend him: your chief deſign will always be to pleaſe him: and, whatſoever frailties or ſurpriſes happen, as long as this deſign ſubſiſts, you need not doubt but that they always will be pardonable. Do but *love* him above

all

all things, and all your imperfections, whatſoe're they are, will only ſerve to humble you, they never will incline you to deſpair.

S. *Peter* tells us, that (p) *Love covers a multitude of faults.* Conſider only the imperfections of little Children: how frequent, and how troubleſome they are: And yet the tenderneſs of any loving Parent *covers* all. Theſe children are dutiful in the main: they love their Parents better than any other Friends: and are ſorry for nothing more than for offending them. On the other ſide, their Parents, who ſee it, are ſatisfied in the main: They are content to bear with other dayly failings: They correct and chide them for their leſſer faults: But, though they are frequently diſpleas'd, there is no danger of their children being diſinherited. The more we ſee, and the more

(p) 1 *Pet.* 4. 8.

clearly we discover, the guilt of our dayly trespasses, the more we ought to humble our selves in presence of our God, and love him so much more for loving us in spite of all our faults, and for assuring us that if our Love persever to the end, we shall never lose our right to the inheritance of Heaven. Is not this enough to moderate and govern all our fears? What need we wish for more?

SECT. II.

The mischief of long Examens.

IF Scrupulous people would but find a little leasure to consider seriously such comfortable truths as these, they would soon find benefit by them: but their mischief is, they have always something else to do, when they should think *how good* God is. Instead of calling to mind how kind and ten-

tender a *Father* they have *in Heaven*, their buſy thoughts are entertain'd with fancies of his being a ſevere and cruel *Tyrant* upon *Earth*. A Tyrant that exacts more from them than their utmoſt diligence is able to perform: an Enemy that always watches to deſtroy them, and delights in laying hold of any opportunity to ruine them: a Maſter ſo intolerably rigid in exacting his accounts, that when his Slaves have done whatever they can, 'tis all in vain, there is no poſſibility of ever making even reckonings with him. I will not ſay, they abſolutely *are* of this opinion: but this I am ſure of, they behave themſelves as if they *were*. 'Tis hard to determine what opinion they are of, or whether they have any opinion at all. The only conjecture which I dare rely upon, is this: that where their Fears prevail, they are little better (if not worſe)

than Infidels. They dare not believe the Church of God, nor even God himself: and therefore 'tis no wonder, if they dare not trust their Confessor.

The Word of God himself assures them in general that (*q*) *his Commands are not grievous*: and yet they cannot believe it. They think the obligation of confessing is the most grievous thing imaginable; and that 'tis morally impossible to be comply'd with.

The Council of *Trent* assures them in particular, that *this* Command *is not grievous*. It declares, that (*r*) *it is an impious thing*, either *to say it is impossible, or to call it a Torture of Consciences*. They do not believe this neither. They find by experience that their Spirits are upon the wrack, and that it is a *Torture* to them, whensoever they prepare for Confession. 'Tis true; it is their own fault, who are wilful in over-

(q) 1 *Jo.* 5. 3. (r) *Sess.* 14. *cap.* 5.

over-doing their duty. But this is another truth, which they believe no more than the reſt. They are too proud to blame themſelves; and therefore lay the fault upon their obligation.

The Council declares that (s) *NOTHING MORE is required in the Church from Penitents, than that after a DILIGENT EXAMEN every one confeſs thoſe ſins in which THEY REMEMBER themſelves to have offended mortally the Lord their God: and that THE REST of their Sins*, whatſoever they are, *which after a diligent examen DO NOT occur to mind, are ALL underſtood*

(s) Conſtat enim, nihil aliud in Eccleſia a pœnitentibus exigi, quam ut poſtquam quiſque diligentius ſe excuſſerit----ea peccata confiteatur, quibus ſe Dominum & Deum ſuum mortaliter offendiſſe meminerit: reliqua autem peccata, quæ diligenter cogitanti non occurrunt, in univerſum, eadem Confeſſione incluſa eſſe intelliguntur. *Ibid.*

understood to be INCLUDED *in the same Confession.* This Declaration would be as comfortable as their hearts can wish, if they did but believe it.

Nothing more is *required*, than to confess those Sins which *they remember*; not which they *can*, but which they *do* remember. From whence it plainly follows, that, if they *do not* remember, they are altogether as secure as if they *could not*. If we were obliged to examine till we remember *all*; then indeed our proud Penitents, who wilfully torture themselves with long and tedious examens, would be very much in the right of it: But, on the contrary, 'tis evident the Council does not oblige us to *remember*; it only obliges us to *examine*. Neither is it in the power of any Council to command a man, to have a good memory: but, such as it is, a good one, or a bad one, we are commanded

manded to be diligent in calling it to an account. This done, We neither are the better, if we remember *all*, nor worſe, if we forget the *greateſt part*. If we remember our ſins exactly, *all and every one* of them, what greater advantage can we expect, than to have them *all and every one* forgiven us? This is certainly All: and this advantage is the very ſame, to all intents and purpoſes of pardon, although we forget the *greateſt part*, becauſe the Council has declared, they are *all* forgiven as fully and as entirely as if we had remember'd and confeſs'd them.

To what purpoſe then is all this torturing of their minds, when it manifeſtly does more harm than good? It diſturbs their thoughts, it robs them of their peace, it dries up their devotion, it deprives them of all comfort, it renders them exceſſively uneaſy, it tempts and leads them to impatience and deſpair. To

To what purpoſe is all this pudder of examining? Is it to pleaſe God, or your ſelf? To pleaſe your ſelf, is a dangerous buſineſs: for, although your diſobedience may be pleaſing here, 'tis much to be fear'd the puniſhment of it will be very unpleaſant hereafter. And, as for pleaſing God, 'tis certain he is equally pleas'd, when he has equally forgiven us: and the Council aſſures us, he equally forgives what we forget, and as perfectly, as what we remember.

Let us now compare the doctrine of the Council, with the practiſe of theſe people. According to their practice, there is nothing more neceſſary than this *endleſs diligence*: and according to the Council, there is nothing more needleſs. From whence I leave you to conclude, whether or no theſe examining creatures are thoſe who *hear the Church*, or whether they are not in ſome dan-

danger of being, one day, reckon'd amongſt the *Heathens* and the *Publicans*.

SECT. III.

Blind Obedience the beſt Remedy.

AN humble Penitent is free from theſe diſorders. His ſcrupuloſity may be fearful; 'tis the nature of it to be ſo: but it never is incurable: becauſe 'tis truly humble and ſubmiſſive. The remedies of it are always at hand; And, with his Confeſſor's advice, he is always ready to apply them. His Confeſſor needs only ſay the word; he never asks a reaſon *why*. He has a general reaſon for all doubtful caſes whatſoever; a reaſon which he always carries about with him; an everlaſting reaſon which is ever the ſame, and which he is infallibly aſſured of, that *in doubtful caſes nothing is ſo reaſonable as Obedience*. He never has any troubleſome

bleſome doubts, to vex him or moleſt him. He knows for certain, what he is bid do, and *that* he does, without ever doubting of it. He fears nothing but himſelf; he fears his frailty; he fears his being diſobedient. Theſe are the only things he fears: And therefore he is fearful without diſcouragement, careful without anxiety, and diligent without any trouble. He is as diligent in the examen of his Conſcience, as men of buſineſs are in any ſerious affair. More than this, he is not obliged to: and ſo much as this, is as eaſy to him, as it is ordinary to every body elſe. He is ſo humble, as to enquire of his Confeſſor, what length of time he pleaſes to allow for his examen; and ſo obedient, that he has no inclination to exceed his allowance. He begins his work, goes on with it, and ends it, all with the ſame eaſe.

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He knows very well that the general reaſon of his Obedience is grounded upon as firm a foundation, as the *rock* it ſelf, upon which the *Church* is built: and therefore he never enquires after any particular reaſons, *why* his Confeſſor allows him no more time. He not only deſpiſes all theſe curioſities, but even hates them: becauſe he firmly believes, they are as pernicious as they are ſuperfluous. Nor is it any wonder he believes it, if it be true, that *ſeeing* is *believing*; for he plainly *ſees* the ſad experience of it, in his proud and wilful neighbours, who are never quiet, but are always reſtleſs and uneaſy; never contented, but always labouring in vain to build Security upon the ſandy foundation of their own weak Reaſon. A Foundation which is never firm; but either flies like duſt before each puff of Wind, or elſe is waſht away, and chang'd with every Tide.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Nothing more unreaſonable than a boundleſs Liberty of reaſoning.

IT happens very unluckily for us, that the chief Faculty we have, which God has given us to govern all the reſt, is ſometimes the moſt ungovernable of them all: and that our Reaſon, which calls them all to an account, is ſometimes the moſt unaccountable it ſelf. Our Saviour ſays (t) *Salt is good: but if the Salt have loſt its ſavour, wherewith ſhall it be ſeaſon'd? It is neither fit for the Land, nor for the Dunghil, but men caſt it out.* In the ſame manner, Reaſon is good: 'tis good, to overſee our Appetites, our Words, and Actions: 'tis good, to watch them, and to keep them within the bounds of Temperance and Moderation: 'tis

(t) *Luk.* 14. 34. 35.

'tis good, to ſummon them before the Bar, examine, reprehend, and puniſh them for their tranſgreſſions: All this, right Reaſon is good for. But if our Reaſon it ſelf be the greateſt tranſgreſſor, the moſt intemperate, the moſt extravagant of all; What is it good for, but to be *caſt out* of doors, and (*u*) *troden under foot by men*? This, I confeſs, is a hard ſaying; a ſevere Sentence: but yet, by what has been already ſaid, it plainly appears it is not more ſevere than it deſerves.

Humane Reaſon is the beſt thing in Nature, if rightly managed; and the worſt, if a proud wilful creature have the keeping of it. 'Tis commonly ſaid, that *Pride will have a fall*: Nor is it any wonder, if it be always true; becauſe it looks too high to ſee the way before it. 'Tis like the Philoſopher who fell into a ditch whilſt he was gazing at the Stars

(u) *Math.* 5. 13.

Stars. The Reaſon which God has given us, if rightly employed, would make us humble and ſubmiſſive; it would open our eyes, to ſee how fallible we are; and open our ears to hear the advice of others, who are wiſer than our ſelves. But, on the contrary, when Reaſon is abuſed, and ill applyed, it makes us proud and wilful: it puffs us up with a vain eſteem of our own judgment; and the higher it raiſes us, the greater fall it gives us.

The fall of our firſt Parents had an influence upon the Underſtanding as well as the Will of their poſterity: and a great part of our original diſeaſe conſiſts in an inſatiable Curioſity, by which we aim at being *like the Higheſt*. We would know all things, and have a reaſon for every thing. This is the deſperate condition of thoſe ſcrupulous perſons, to whom I here addreſs my ſelf. They are brain-

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ſick with too much reaſoning. They thirſt after reaſon, as dropſical people after drink: and, the more you give them, the more you encreaſe the diſtemper. Reaſon without ſubmiſſion, is the very thing which makes them ſick: and nothing will ever cure them, but an univerſal Submiſſion, in all doubtful caſes, without any particular reaſons for it. Their Underſtanding raves continually after an infinity of idle and unneceſſary notions: and, to make it ſober, there is nothing like darkening the windows; for, whilſt you let the light break in upon it, you will never bring it to it ſelf.

At this rate, you'l ſay, God gave us our Reaſon to little purpoſe; if, in doubtful caſes, it be better to reſign it, than to uſe it. I beg your pardon. Our Reaſon is given us, to as much purpoſe as our other Faculties are: It is given us, to make right uſe of it;

it; and not to enjoy the pleaſure of it at our own diſcretion. We are as much obliged to obſerve the Rules of Temperance in reaſoning, as in eating and drinking: and our Curioſity of knowing too much is oftentimes as dangerous as either Gluttony or Drunkenneſs. There are many things which are not proper for us to eat: and there are many more, which are as improper for us to know. But a proud Mind is like a depraved Appetite, and both are moſt inclined to what is moſt pernicious to them. Such was the diſeaſe of our firſt Parents, which ſtill runs in the blood of the whole Family. They had *knowledg* enough to ſerve their turn, but were not contented with it: they were curious to try the experiment of what was meant by *knowing good and evil*: they *knew* it to their ſorrow, and paid dearly for it. A little Blind Obedience would have kept them in the

the ſtate of Innocence: but, to obey without a particular reaſon *why*, was more than they were willing to ſupport. They would not endure to be kept in any degree of Darkneſs. Their inſatiable Curioſity allow'd no terms of moderation to their Uſe of Reaſon. They would have *their eyes opened*: they would *be as Gods:* they would either know All or Nothing. See here an early example of the Intemperance of Humane Reaſon. See how ſpeedily, and how ſeverely it was puniſh'd. And learn from thence this uſeful Leſſon; that we are as much obliged to obſerve the rules of Temperance in Uſing of our Reaſon, as we are to keep a Moderation and Decorum in the Uſe of meat and drink.

All or nothing, is the Motto of a Libertin. All that lies in his way, is lawful to him. *What was it All made for*? What was He himſelf created for, but to *enjoy*

the faculties which Nature has beſtow'd upon him? He values no other *uſe* than the *enjoyment* of them. When he plays the Glutton, or the Drunkard, &c. he juſtifies himſelf with asking, *Is it not lawful for a man to eat and drink*, &c. *What were All theſe things made for*? What were his Appetites and Reaſon made for, but to pick and chuſe, love and hate, think and do, what-e're he pleaſes? The thinking part of him (which is a thing he ſcarce knows what to think of) ſeems capable of knowing All things: and *why ſhould any Laws of God or Man pretend to limit it?* So unreaſonable is the Uſe of Humane Reaſon, when it is a Slave to Pride and Wilfulneſs which commonly are the keepers and diſpoſers of it! *My Reaſon is my own*, ſay they; *God did not give it me for nothing. What matter is't, how dark and doubtful theſe things are? My Reaſon is my Judge. My boundleſs*

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Reaſon is capable of knowing All things: *Why ſhould any body ſtint it?* The proud and boiſtrous Sea when it ſwells high, and with a full tide ruſhes in upon the ſhore, if it could ſpeak, might ſay the ſame thing with as good a grace: *My boundleſs waves are able to oreflow the Earth*: *and why ſhould I ſtop here?* Proud Creatures! 'Tis in vain to lift up your rebellious hands againſt the Hand that made you; (w) *Though hand joyn in hand, you ſhall not be unpuniſhed.* He who has (x) *ſhut up the Sea with doors, and ſaid, here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtay'd*; He, I ſay, has ſhut up Humane Reaſon within the compaſs of its Duty, and ſaid, *Hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no further.*

(w) *Prov.* 16. 5. (x) *Job.* 38. 8. 11.

CHAP. VI.

The difference betwixt a Philoſopher and a Chriſtian, concerning the Submiſſion of Humane Reaſon.

THe Liberties of natural Reaſon are as large as thoſe of Nature it ſelf: and as we know no certain bounds of natural cauſes and effects, ſo we preſcribe no limits to our natural Reaſon in endeavouring to diſcover them. All this viſible World, and even the Maker of it (ſo far as we can trace his footſteps, and *underſtand* him *by the things* which he has *made*) are the object and the ſubject of our ſpeculations. 'Tis like a Garden of Delight, where Humane Reaſon may divert it ſelf; and ramble up and down without ever finding any end of it. 'Tis a place of Pleaſure, where a Philo-

Philoſopher dayly meets with freſh diſcoveries of entertainment for his curioſity, which is the only greedy Appetite he has. His buſineſs does not lie in Action, but in Contemplation: and, in this reſpect, he may truly ſay, the Natural World is all his own: He may *think*, and *judge*, and *reaſon*, as he pleaſes, concerning all, and every part, of it.

The Supernatural World is quite another thing. The great and glorious End, which all good Chriſtians aim at, is Supernatural: and to make our natural reaſon the ſupreme Judge of matters relating to this End, is a thing manifeſtly unreaſonable. For, although it be excuſable in a Philoſopher, to take nothing upon truſt, it would be evidently unpardonable in a Chriſtian. Of all the four laſt things, which Chriſtians ought to *remember* that they may *never ſin*; Death is the only thing we naturally are aſſured of. No bo-

dy's natural reaſon can demonſtrate what we believe concerning Judgment, Hell, or Heaven. And yet, to prepare for this Judgment, to avoid this Hell, and to enjoy this Heaven, a good Chriſtian ſacrifices all things here, his fortune, his life, his friends, and whatſoever is moſt dear to him. At the Approach of Death, he reſigns his Spirit into the hands of God: and although he does not *ſee* in *what* his future Happineſs conſiſts; he puts his Confidence in God, who has reveal'd his Mercies to us; and in the Church, who has aſſured us of his Promiſes. He joyfully relies upon theſe great aſſurances of more than he is able to conceive: and is content to take them upon truſt.

I do not wonder, that no body is worthy of Heaven, who dares not take God's word for it. But this I admire, that they who can truſt God with their Souls, with their Eternity, with their unſeen

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and unknown hopes of Happineſs in Heaven; nevertheleſs cannot ſubmit ſo far, as to truſt him with their conduct upon Earth, and to rely upon the Guides which he has given them. If we can follow God ſo cheerfully into an unſeen World: Why can we not follow him as cheerfully through an unknown Way? The Danger ſurely is the greateſt in the End: and, if we can truſt him when we part from hence, I know no reaſon why we may not truſt him all the while we are here.

CHAP. VII.

The different Sentiments of a Proud and an Humble Penitent, concerning Blind Obedience.

HAppy are they who are blindly Obedient, without demurring, reaſoning, or diſputing. They are embarkt in a Veſſel,

where they may ſleep ſecure: they need not take any further care, they have *Jeſus Chriſt* for their Pilot. All that we receive from God, we ought to Sacrifice to him; and conſequently our Underſtanding as well as our Will. If we fail in this one point, our being exact in all the reſt will ſignifie little or nothing. The fall of *Lucifer*, and his companions, is a ſufficient proof. They were Angels in all other reſpects, and never had been Devils, if they had ſubmitted their Underſtanding and their Will to him who made them. That Pride which alone was enough to caſt the Angels out of Heaven, That alone, though we were Angels in all things elſe, is enough to hinder us from ever going thither. Our beſt way to ſecure our ſelves, and to diſcover the artifices of an Enemy who is as cunning as he is malicious, is to look upon Obedience as the touch-ſtone of all the vertue and perfection

fection which we aim at. The Devil can counterfeit all other vertues, but he could never counterfeit Obedience. Had he at firſt ſubmitted his Will and Underſtanding to his great Superior, who made him; had he but been Obedient while he was an Angel, he had never been a Devil. If Obedience be our Rule, in all our Actions, and in all the Circumſtances of them; if it be our dayly buſineſs to improve and grow more perfect in complying with this Rule; it is impoſſible that we ſhould ever err. We cannot but know what we are bid to do; and, if we know that, we know the High-way to Heaven: Let us only do as we are bid, and we ſhall certainly go thither. As long as the Sheep follow their Shepherd, they are ſafe: but, if any of them go aſtray from the Flock, 'tis no Wonder they are devoured by the Wolves.

Theſe are the Sentiments of an an humble Penitent. But they who are proud and wilful, are not ſo eaſily ſatisfied concerning theſe matters. The very thought of Blind Obedience is like news of death, to their beloved Curioſity, and darling Humour, which they are ſo deſperately fond of. If Death it ſelf ſhould come within their view, and ſhew his Sythe, and only ſome few Sands at the bottom of the Glaſs, it would not chill their Spirits more than it does to think their Curioſity muſt be buried alive, and their Humour lie as low as duſt, without ever riſing again. If they were truly Penitent, the Spirit of Repentance would inſpire a holy revenge in puniſhing thoſe Faculties of the Soul, which were the inſtruments of Sin. They would puniſh their Will, by reſtraining it in things which are indifferent, and mortifie their Underſtanding, by reſigning it in matters which

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are doubtful. If they conſider'd ſeriouſly the extravagancies which attend their Pride and Curioſity, and the pernicious conſequences of their Wilful Humor, they would hate them now, as much as heretofore they loved them: they would not ſuffer them ſo much as to ſee the Light, which they are ſo unworthy of, but willingly condemn them to the Darkneſs of a Dungeon, during life. 'Tis a ſevere Sentence: But what have you to ſay againſt it, that it may not paſs?

What am I the better for my Reaſon, if I may not act according to it?

In doubtful caſes, you never act more conformably to your own right reaſon, than when you renounce the probability of your Speculations, and ſubmit them to your Judge without reaſoning the matter with him.

My Confeſſor may be miſtaken.

Very well: He may ſo. But does not God know *that* as well as you? And yet he has appointed him to be your Judge.

I really believe he is miſtaken.

You may believe the contrary, if you pleaſe; as long as you are not *certain* of it.

I have a great many reaſons to think him in the wrong, and no particular reaſon to think him in the right.

Put all your *reaſons* in one Scale: put his *Authority* in the other: And, if it have as much weight with you as it ought to have, 'twill over-weigh them all. His Authority is from God: Your reaſons, which tempt you to deſpiſe it, are no better than Suggeſtions of the Devil. His Authority is abſolutely certain and ſecure: Your reaſons (if there happen to be any reaſon in them) are but doubtful and uncertain. Put all this together: Conſider it well:

well: And you will ſoon be aſhamed of diſputing ſuch matters any longer with your Confeſſor.

Is not this being what they call Prieſt-ridden?

The Wits of our profane Age are pleaſed to call it ſo. But ſome people are too witty, to be wiſe. There buſineſs is not ſo much to underſtand any thing, as to laugh at all things. Whatever comes in their way, if it furniſh matter for a jeſt, they take no further care. They have a merry time, while it laſts. But, when their Life's in danger, there are none more tractable in the hands of a Phyſician: They'l be *Doctor-ridden* as much as you pleaſe. Nay, if it be only their Eſtate which is in jeopardy, They'l be *Lawyer-ridden* too. They pin their faith upon their Lawyer's ſleeve. They argue not the matter with him. They ſuffer not their Reaſon to come in competition

tion with his Skill. He tell's them, *This is Law.* They do not conceive *how* it comes to be ſo. It ſeems unreaſonable to them. And yet they believe him: they ſubmit: and blindly follow his Advice. Beſides, when all is done, they are *Judge-ridden* whether they will or no; and neither dare nor can complain of it: becauſe they know very well, that no body is fit to live under any form of Government, who will not ſubmit to ſuch Judges as are appointed by the Law. And truly, with all ſubmiſſion to his Majeſty, I ſee no reaſon why we ought not to have ſome reſpect for *God*'s Judges, as well as for the *King*'s.

CHAP. VIII.

A Scripture-Objection answer'd.

'TIs written in Scripture, that (y) *if the Blind lead the the Blind, they both fall into the Ditch.* But however, this Text if rightly understood, is no good argument against Blind Obedience.

I. If *both* are innocently *blind*, 'tis certain that neither of them will fall into the pit of *Hell*, which here is represented by the *Ditch.* Because the Divine Justice cannot punish Innocency, or condemn the Blindness of those who are not guilty of it.

II. If a Confessor be proud and careless, so as to be guilty of his Blindness, nevertheless the Penitents who (in doubtful matters) humbly and sincerely follow his Advice

(y) *Math.* 15. 14.

Advice, will never be puniſh'd for his fault, but be rewarded for obeying him. 'Tis written in Scripture that the Soul which commits the Sin, the ſame ſhall die; and no other ſhall ſuffer, either for it, or with it. The words are plain; (z) *The Soul that ſinneth, it ſhall die: The Son ſhall not bear the iniquity of the Father, but the wickedneſs of the wicked* Father *ſhall be upon him* only. From whence it evidently follows, that altho' the Ghoſtly Father be willfully and wickedly Blind, yet all Sincere and Humble Penitents (in all their doubts) may innocently and ſecurely ſubmit to him: becauſe, not being partners of his Guilt, they cannot poſſibly be made partakers of his Puniſhment.

III. If *both* are criminally *blind*, that is, if they love darkneſs, if they ſhut their eyes againſt the light, if they are blind becauſe they

(z) *Ezek.* 18. 20.

they have no mind to ſee, in a word, if they are proud and willful, as the *Phariſees* and their *Diſciples* were; Then indeed, they *both* deſerve to *fall into the Ditch.*

For example: You have no mind to obey your Confeſſor, and therefore you will not believe him: You have a mind to follow your own humour, and therefore you harken to thoſe little reaſons, which you ſeem to have for it. In this caſe, you are not ſincere, you are partial in your own favour: you are more willing to believe your ſelf than to believe your Guide, and more deſirous to pleaſe your ſelf than to pleaſe God. This is the willful part of your Blindneſs. Let us now conſider the pride of it. You are naturally curious in what belongs to you: you are *wiſe in your own conceit*, and puffed up with the thought of being ſo: you think it very hard for any body elſe to underſtand you better than you under-

underſtand your ſelf, and therefore you value your own judgment too much, and your Confeſſor's too little. But yet your Pride and Wilfulneſs are no excuſe for your Blindneſs. One fault is no excuſe for another. Your wilful Pride is a notorious fault: 'tis viſible to every body elſe: and, if it did not blind you, it would be viſible to your ſelf. 'Tis in your power to be humble and ſubmiſſive, if you pleaſe. 'Tis a vertue, which if you ſeriouſly endeavour to practiſe, God will help you: and, if you heartily beg it of him, he will not fail to give it you. Mean time, as blind as you are, you are not ſo thoroughly confident of your own opinion, but that you would be glad to have it ſeconded by the Authority of your Guide. For this reaſon, you are ſo eager to diſcourſe with him; not to know his mind, but to let him know yours: not to ſubmit to what he ſays,

ſays, but to make him ſubſcribe to what you think: not to learn his opinion, but to teach him your own. If you cannot prevail; you conſult another; and another: And your buſineſs is to find, either a Guide that will be guided by you (which is no Guide at all) or elſe a Guide as much miſtaken as your ſelf, who is contented to lead you your own way; and then, to be ſure, your Blindneſs will not excuſe you, becauſe 'tis your own fault from the beginning to the end. Had you humbly and ſincerely relied upon the Guide which Providence appointed you, you had been certain, either to be in the right way, or to be blameleſs, if in the wrong. But ſince you proudly and wilfully left a Guide *according to God's heart*, to take another according to your own, you ſought for darkneſs, and for your puniſhment you found it: and then indeed, you may be ſure, if your Blind Guide *fall into the Ditch*, you'l fall in after him. CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Pretences of Reaſon anſwer'd.

ONe would think, the bare conſideration of the follies and the miſchiefs which attend the pride and wilfulneſs of weighing and comparing every trifling reaſon *pro* and *con*, in every doubtful matter, one would think, I ſay, that this alone were more than abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy any reaſonable perſon, that nothing is more rational, than to ſilence theſe impertinent reaſons, and to turn them out of doors. I am ſure there is very good reaſon for it: and, if Reaſon does it, 'tis enough; the Enemies of Blind Obedience have no reaſon to complain.

And yet 'tis commonly their cuſtom, not only to complain, but to object a great many odious things againſt it, which look as if

if they were a little ſpiteful in miſrepreſenting it. *Has not God given us our Reaſon? Are we not accountable to him for it? And are we not bound in Duty to make the beſt uſe we can of it?*

'Tis eaſily anſwer'd: We certainly are ſo: and becauſe our blind Submiſſion is grounded upon the beſt Reaſon we have, therefore 'tis certain that we make the beſt uſe we can of it, when we blindly ſubmit. 'Tis true; if a man pretended to baniſh all reaſon whatſoever, and to ſubmit himſelf univerſally without any manner of reaſon for it; Then, I muſt needs confeſs, our Blind Submiſſion would be the moſt unreaſonable thing in the World. But this is never practiſed or adviſed by any that I ever heard of.

Whenſoever we ſubmit our *ſpeculative* reaſons to the Authority of a Confeſſor, 'tis always under the conduct and influence of our chief

chief *practical* Reaſon, which is ſuperior to them, and has a legal juriſdiction over them. Our *ſpeculations* are numberleſs: and, in deciding doubtful matters, if we give them audience, our labour is in vain. For, either we hear them all together, and then there is nothing but confuſion: or elſe we hear them one by one, and then there is no end of them. Our *practical* notions lie within a little compaſs: they are given us by God himſelf as rules of life and action: they are few, and eaſily underſtood; they are plain and eaſily applied; and, which is beſt of all, the operation of them is every jot as ſafe, as the underſtanding and applying of them are eaſie. Theſe practical principles are the beſt Reaſon of Mankind. By theſe, in worldly affairs we behave our ſelves like Men; and by the ſame, in ſpiritual matters, we act like Chriſtians; And therefore, if by theſe very principles

ciples we ſuſpend and ſilence all thoſe needleſs ſpeculations, which are only fit to trouble and moleſt us; if we command them to retire; and order them to give place to Authority: Where is the harm? Can you blame us for following the beſt Reaſon we have, and making the beſt uſe we can of it? When a man takes aim, and ſhuts one eye; you may ſay, he's blind, if you pleaſe: but the truth is, he only winks with the left eye, that he may ſee much better with the right.

If this were well conſider'd, it would pacifie a little the minds of thoſe people, who purſue ſo fiercely their pretentions to a boundleſs liberty of reaſoning. They would ſoon diſcover, not only that the Obedience, which I plead for, is not ſo blind as they are willing to repreſent it; but alſo that it allows them as much liberty as any reaſonable man can wiſh for.

1. In

1. In things which are evident, or absolutely certain, no body questions but that our Reason has free room to exercise it self without restraint. No body ever goes to a Confessor to consult him, whether or no they ought to believe their Creed; whether the seven deadly sins be lawful or not; or whether the Ten Commandments ought to be observ'd. They have no need of troubling their Guides about those things which every body knows that all the Catholick world agrees in.

2. In matters which are dark and doubtful, where Authority has hitherto been silent, and where we have not the opportunity of consulting it; we enjoy the self-same freedom, with all the rights and priviledges of exercising our Reason and Judgment.

3. In lesser doubts, which we can easily determine, we are not used to go to any man for counsel: 'tis only when we are a little puz-

led,

led, when we are uneasy and perplext, 'tis only then we have recourse to those who are commission'd to direct us. When we begin to spell and pudder upon difficulties, whether we *may* or *may not*, whether we *ought* or *ought not*; when we plainly find our selves at a loss, and know not how to satisfie our mind about the matter before us; when we begin to want a little help, and are glad with all our hearts to call for it: Pray tell me, is there any thing more reasonable than to refer these doubtful cases to the arbitration of a Confessor, who is expresly deputed by God and his Church, to judge for those who are not capable of judging easily and clearly for themselves? Is not his advice worth our taking, when 'tis worth our asking? When we know not how to chuse for our selves, and therefore prudently resolve to let our Confessor chuse for us, why should we quarrel with

with the same Prudence for obliging us to approve his choice? It would be a strange unreasonable perverseness indeed, if when we could not do the work our selves, we would not suffer any body else to do it for us.

When both parties are weary of an expensive suit of Law, and by common consent agree to make short work of it, and refer it to the arbitration of a neighbour; If it were your own case, and the Sentence were given against you, would you presently fly back from your bargain, and refuse to stand to his Judgment? I am sure no man of Honour would do it. In the same manner, when a case is doubtful, when your speculative reasons are not able to decide it to your satisfaction, when you grow quite weary and despair of ending the dispute; you cannot think of any thing better than to appeal to the Authority of your Confessor; nor

can

nor can I think of any thing worſe, than to refuſe his Arbitration, when you had not only accepted, but deſired, it. You know very well, that in any temporal matter, it would not be lookt upon as fair and honeſt dealing. What have you to ſay in your defence?

Is it fitting that I ſhould ſubmit without a reaſon?

Pray, what reaſon had you to conſult him? Was it not becauſe you found your ſelf unſatisfied with all your own particular reaſons, and therefore wiſely abandon'd them to appeal to his Authority? If this were a good reaſon, to *appeal*; why is it not a good one, to *ſubmit*? Is it not a ſhame, to put ſuch an affront upon the Common Reaſon of mankind, as to uſe it like a bauble, only fit for Childrens-play? and to be always ſhifting backwards and forwards, firſt from reaſon to Authority,

and then from the ſame authority to the ſame reaſon again? This is never the way to end any diſpute, but always the way to make it endleſs.

I do not fly back from Authority to my own reaſon, but only am curious to know his reaſons, becauſe I believe they may be better than mine.

And yet, after all, if he ſhould tell you his reaſons, you would not be ſatisfied with them, till you had well examined them, and made them your own. His Authority would ſignifie nothing at all; nor his Reaſon neither, any further than your own reaſon approves it. So that, from the Authority which you appeal'd to, you manifeſtly fly back to your own reaſon again. The proudeſt Creature in the World, would do as much as this: nor can you ſhew me the leaſt appearance of Chriſtian Humility, in this way of proceeding. *Well;*

Well; but when I am once convinced, I ſhall be quiet ever after.

It ſeems you are vain enough to think ſo, in ſpite of all your dayly experience to the contrary. You know very well, that the *April*-Sun-ſhine is not more unconſtant, than the clearneſs of your reaſons. One moment they ſhine bright, and the next they are under a cloud. How often have you thought your ſelf convinc'd? How often have you rejoyc'd at it, and thank'd your Confeſſor for it? and preſently after, you have been much more in pain, and more tormented than before. Your ſpeculations, which appear'd to be entirely routed, rallied up again with double forces of recruits, and with a freſh aſſault broke in upon your mind, ruffled your thoughts, and riffled all the treaſure of your peace.

'Tis very true ; but I beg one anſwer more ; only to this one queſtion: and then I am confident I ſhall be ſatisfied.

'Tis a thouſand pities, you ſhould not be ſatisfied, upon ſuch eaſy terms. But pray, conſider how many thouſands of theſe *one-queſtions* you have had an anſwer to already ; and all to no other purpoſe, than to render your condition dayly worſe and worſe. Reaſon to Scruples, is like Oyl to Fire: Water may put it out ; but Oyl will rather feed it, and encreaſe the Flame.

'Tis Charity in a Confeſſor, to inſtruct me : Is he not my Teacher, as well as my Judge?

Yes: And he is your *Judge* as well as your *Teacher*. His *Charity* does not oblige him, nor his *Prudence* permit him, to *teach* you any thing, but what he *judges* fitting for you. There are a great many truths, which are only

only proper to feed your Curioſity, and very unfit to nouriſh Piety, much leſs, to improve your Humility. When your Confeſſor has judged the caſe, if you ask his reaſons for it, and will not ſubmit till you are thoroughly ſatisfied that he is certainly in the right; it is no longer He that judges for you: he only inſtructs you, and helps you to judge for your ſelf. To what purpoſe are you ſo inquiſitive? 'Tis a thing not only needleſs, but dangerous. For, 1. If it be uſeful to you, he'l inſtruct you, of his own accord: 'tis his Duty ſo to do: and, if he does not, 'tis his fault, not yours. 2. Although his Conſcience tells him, that it is a great deal better and ſafer for you, not to know his reaſons: yet perhaps his complaiſance, or (if you pleaſe) his good nature, may incline him to hazard the peace of your Soul, by gratifying of your Curioſity:

And then you are both to blame; you, for asking; he, for condescending.

If Reason be a good thing in it self, why may I not ask it? And, if my Motive, of desiring it, be also good, why may I not have it for asking?

You have already too much reason: you have a great deal more than you well know what to do with: and therefore, tho' it be good in it self 'tis far from being good for you. And truly, if it be not good for you, if you know not what to do with it, if you have already to much of it, I do not easily conceive what sort of good motive you can have, to wish for more.

I am very uneasy with fears and apprehensions of doing amiss: this uneasiness is a great hindrance to me, in my duties and devotions; and therefore I am always busie, either studying or enquiring, to find out a clear and certain reason, to secure me from all fear.

I

I underſtand you very well. You are like a Gentleman who was very uneaſy for fear of wanting Money. He thought that if once he could get the Philoſopher's Stone, it would change all things into Gold, and therefore was always buſy in ſtudying how to find it out: but 'twas his misfortune, that the thing he ſought for, was not to be found. A *ſpeculative certainty* of the goodneſs and lawfulneſs of every particular action, and every circumſtance of it, would be a fine thing indeed, if it were to be had. But before you inquire any further after it, I beg you to conſider how manifeſtly impoſſible it is to diſſect one ſingle action into all its parts, and to read particular lectures of morality upon them, with as many demonſtrations to confirm the truth and the exactneſs of them all. 1. In one ſingle action, beſides

the ſubſtance of it, our Divines obſerve no leſs than ſix or ſeven general circumſtances, as Perſon, Time, Place, Motive, Means, and Manner of doing. The harmony and due proportion of all theſe muſt firſt be well obſerv'd and clearly proved, before 'tis poſſible to form a ſpeculative Judgment of the Whole, eſpecially a certain one, which may exclude all fear. 2. Theſe general circumſtances are like ſpawners, and often have a great many little particular ones within them. 3. Even theſe little ones, which hardly are diſcernable by common eyes, may be diſſected too, and ſtill afford new matter for a Scene of freſh diſcoveries. 4. Some of theſe circumſtances, even thoſe of the greateſt importance, are ſuch thin vaniſhing things, that 'tis impoſſible for any body's thoughts to lay faſt hold of them. The Purity of our Intention, the Sincerity

of

of our Endeavours, the Exact proportion of our Diligence, &c, are things which all the natural Reaſon in the world is never able to demonſtrate. 5. Although the general Maxims of Morality are clear and evident, yet nevertheleſs the uſe and application of them oftentimes are hid and wrapt up in obſcurity and darkneſs. They are like thoſe ſubterraneous ſecrets which lie too deep for humane induſtry to reach them. The Art of Man can neither fetch them out, and place them in the open light: nor can it contrive a way to go and ſee them where they are, becauſe, in ſuch a deep deſcent, the Lamp burns blew immediately, and ſoon goes out. Did you ever hear of a man ſo fooliſh, as to attempt the digging of a ſtaircaſe to the Center of the earth? 'Tis every jot as impoſſible to make a clear diſcovery

of Secrets which lie hidden in the center of our Hearts.

Is not this enough to drive a fearful Soul into Deſpair?

'Tis very well, if it does ſo. 'Tis the very thing I would be at. *Deſpair* is not always bad; but ſometimes abſolutely neceſſary. Many a Man has ruin'd a good eſtate, for want of a little deſpair. The Gentleman, I ſpoke of laſt, who was ſo fond of trying coſtly experiments, to find out the Philoſopher's Stone, if in good time he had deſpair'd of finding it, he might have ſaved his labour, and his eſtate too. The ſooner you deſpair, the better, provided you deſpair in the right place. There are many Souls in Heaven, who would never have been there, if they had not deſpair'd here. 'They would never have been ſo much in love with the next world, if they had not deſpair'd of being happy in this. They would never have

have prayed so heartily and so devoutly for the assistance of God's grace, if they had not despair'd of being able to work their Salvation without it. And I verily believe that you your self will never submit so humbly, readily, and chearfully, as you ought, to the Authority of your Confessor, till you despair entirely of ever finding any comfort in your own fantastical speculations.

CHAP. X.

Pretences of Conscience consider'd.

'Tis impossible for a Timorous Conscience to be *quiet* without being *certain*. 'Tis also impossible, in the darkness of moral doubts, to find out any *speculative certainty*. And consequently it highly concerns us to consider what *practical certainty* may be had, and to make

make the beſt markets we can of it.

I have, in the beginning of the laſt chapter, already obſerv'd; that in the deciſion of moral doubts our *ſpeculative* reaſons are always ſubordinate to the *practical* principles of our Prudence. Our ſpeculations have no right to any ſhare in the Government of our lives, any further than our Prudential Reaſon, which always ought to have an inſpection over them, approves them as rules to walk by. They have only a conſulting voice in all deliberations, *when* and *where* they are ſummon'd to appear: Our Soveraign Reaſon ſtill preſides in the Aſſembly: It determines all things, at its own diſcretion, not theirs: And, if they happen to grow tedious and impertinent, as oftentimes they are, it has the power to prorogue them, or diſſolve them, as it pleaſes; and decide the matter without them. So

So that here are two paths before us, and only two, which lead us to a *practical certainty*: the one, by way of ſpeculative reaſoning, the other, by way of Authority: and the main queſtion is; which of theſe two is beſt?

When we ground our practical certainty upon the probability of ſpeculative reaſon, we commonly meet with ſome difficulty and danger by the way, before we come at it. A long examen oftentimes is neceſſary, to weigh each grain of probability; whether it be more than it need be, or leſs than it ſhould be, or juſt gold-weight. 'Tis true; a man of ſenſe and ſound judgment, may make a very good ſhift to overcome the difficulty and the danger too: But how theſe troubleſome circumſtances will agree with the temper and conſtitution of a timorous Conſcience, I do not ſo eaſily conceive.

On the other hand, when all our doubtful and uncertain ſpeculations are laid aſide, and our practical certainty is grounded wholly and entirely upon the Authority of a Confeſſor; the caſe is quite alter'd: 'tis no longer, either difficult or dangerous. There's no examen requiſite: no weighing of Authority by grains: the leaſt commiſſion from God, and patent from his Church, is equally eaſy to be known, and equally ſecure to be relied upon. 'Tis a rule which never varies: 'tis applied the ſame way, to all doubts whatſoever: and the very *A*, *B*, *C*, of practical Reaſon, is enough to teach us the application of it. 1. *In all doubtfull caſes I may ſecurely relie upon my Confeſſor's Authority; without examining his reaſons.* 2. *My preſent difficulty is a doubtfull caſe*: 3. *And therefore, in my preſent difficulty, I may ſecurely relie upon his Authority, without examining his reaſons.*

ſons. This is the whole leſſon: there is no need of any more: and 'tis a leſſon ſo ſhort and ſo plain that a body muſt be very dull indeed, who can be long in learning it. It includes only three points: 1. the univerſal principle; 2. the application; and 3. the concluſion. The laſt follows evidently from its premiſes: the ſecond cannot fail: the firſt is abſolutely certain: And what can any reaſonable perſon wiſh for more?

In the next chapter, I ſhall make it my buſineſs to prove by Scripture, the abſolute certainty of it. Mean time I ſhall apply my ſelf to conſider the two ſorts of practical certainty:: 1. in what they agree; 2. in what they differ; 3. which of the two is better, and more favourably calculated for the eaſe and comfort of a timorous Conſcience.

SECT.

SECT. I.

The two ſorts of Practical Certainty explain'd.

THey both agree in being equally obſcure, and leaving us in the dark, without ſatisfying us *whether or no* the *Action* or *Omiſſion* be lawful *in it ſelf*. They only undertake to aſſure us that whether it be lawful *in it ſelf* or not, 'tis certainly lawful *to us*: and truly this is as much as a wiſe man would wiſh for, or a good man needs to care for. Whether or no it be lawful *in it ſelf*, is only a *ſpeculative* doubt; and the deciſion of it, is not neceſſary for our *practiſe*. 'Tis enough that we have done our duty in enquiring after it: and that we have either well conſider'd the ſufficient probability of our ſpeculations, or more wiſely conſulted the ſure Authority of our Confeſſor. This done,

done; we are as *ſecure*, as we are *ſincere*.

Although we are not *ſpeculatively certain* of its being lawful *in it ſelf*; we are *practically certain* of its being lawful *to us*. We hope the thing is lawful *in it ſelf*. If we knew for certain that it is not *ſo*, we would not do it. We have done what's fitting for a good Chriſtian to do in doubtful caſes: More than this, we are not obliged to: And therefore we ſecurely lay aſide all further care. We are *practically certain* that, if we are miſtaken, we are not guilty of it. Our God, who ſees our hearts, is as well pleaſed with us, as if we had not been deceiv'd: He will not fail to reward the Sincerity of our good intentions: And when the Humility of blind Obedience goes along with them, they will be acceptable to him upon more accounts than one, and receive a double recompence.

SECT

SECT. II.

When we rely upon our Confessor's Authority, our Certainty is Absolute.

ALthough both sorts of practical certainty agree in being equally obscure, on the one side; they do not so well agree in being equally clear and comfortable, on the other: and the difference is the greater, because it lies in the very foundation of them. The one is grounded upon the Probability of speculative reason: the other upon the Authority of a Confessor: and betwixt these two the difference is greater than many people imagine.

When a Penitent judges for himself according to the Probability of his own speculative reason, he must take great care to pro-

proceed prudently in his determinations. For,

1. If he be rash or negligent, if he use not the caution and circumspection which is requisite, if he do not well consider the sufficient probability of his reasons, He is sure to be guilty, whether the thing be lawful *in it self* or not. For, if it happen to be lawful, 'tis better fortune than his Rashness deserves: And, if it be unlawful *in it self*, 'tis certainly so *to him*, because his Negligence, which he must one day answer for, can never justifie him in it. He may thank himself for being mistaken: 'tis his own fault, that he is so: and 'tis impossible for one fault to be a just excuse for another.

2. If he be partial in examining the probability of his opinion, if any Criminal inclination make him more attentive to the one side than the other

other, if he have not patience to consider the full strength of the reasons against him, but chiefly apply the whole force of his wit, to magnifie the reasons which are favourable to his Passion, Interest, or Humour: his Blindness is wilful: and all the world agrees, that wilful Ignorance is no excuse. 'Tis a common case, which dayly happens. We frequently take notice of it, and clearly see it, in our neighbours, though we are not willing to observe it in ourselves. But the more common it is, the greater is our obligation to consider the difficulty and the danger to which a Penitent is always exposed, when he pretends to judge for himself, and to build his *practical certainty* upon the sandy ground of his own probable reasons, without removing the rubbish, and examining well the foundation

foundation, before he ventures to raiſe his edifice upon it.

He who builds upon a rock, is free from all this trouble. He needs not dig deep to ſearch a foundation, which (without examining) he knows to be as firm as he can wiſh it. Such is the advantage of that *practical certainty* which is grounded upon the Authority of a Confeſſor. And to confirm this truth, which is of ſuch importance to all Penitents, I have amongſt our Doctors and Divines made choice of one beyond exception, who not only teaches it himſelf, but ſays it is the common Doctrine of the reſt. He propoſes, and proves, three duties of Blind Obedience, from whence I have drawn three general rules, which are undoubtedly as lawful and as commendable in *ſecular* Penitents, as in *religious* Perſons; whoſoever is the *Superior* of the one, or *Confeſſor* of the other.

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I. *Although* (*a*) *in general we know* our Confeſſor *may be miſtaken; yet, in particular, we never are to ſuppoſe He is ſo, unleſs we are* CERTAIN *of it.* If therefore we are not *certain* of his being in the wrong, we may lawfully ſuppoſe, he is in the right: and by conſequence.

II. We need not (*b*) *ſearch into his reaſons*, nor *know the cauſes, why he bids us* follow his advice. Becauſe, if we may lawfully ſuppoſe him in the right, 'tis evident we need not be inquiſitive

(*a*) Etiam ſi abſolute falli poſſit Superior, id tamen non eſt unquam in particulari præſumendum, niſi de eo conſtet. *Leſſius* de Juſt. & Jure. lib. 2. cap. 46. dub. 5. (*b*) Debet eſſe cœca ad rationes præcepti ſcrutandas; nempe ut non velit ſcire cauſas cur quid præcipiatur; ſed ſatis ei ſit, præcipi vel imponi ab eo qui locum Dei tenet, nec conſtet per ſe eſſe illicitum. *Ibid.*

quiſitive about the matter, for fear of his being in the wrong. And hence it follows alſo, that

III. We need not (*c*) *conſider his imperfections and his faults; nor be therefore leſs ready to obey him.* Becauſe although his Ignorance or Negligence may poſſibly miſlead him, yet, ſince 'tis none of our buſineſs to enquire about it, we are every jot as ſafe, as if an Angel came from Heaven to aſſure us of his being in the right.

If you ask me, why then does *S. F. Sales* adviſe us (*d*) *to chuſe one amongſt ten Thouſand?* Why does he tell us, *he muſt be repleniſh'd with Charity, Knowledge, and Prudence*: and that *if one*

(*c*) Cæca ad imperfectiones & vitia Superioris, ut hæc non conſideret, nec ob hæc minus ad obediendum parata ſit; ſed ſolum conſideret eum cujus locum tenet. *Ibidem.* (*d*) *Introduct.* part. 1. ch. 4. n. 5.

one of these three parts be wanting in him, there is danger? How shall we *chuse* a Confessor, without *considering his imperfections and his faults?* The Answer to all this, is easily found in the same Chapter.

1. When *B. Sales* speaks of *chusing one in ten Thousand*, he no more intends that we should enter into a strict examen of our Confessor's capacity, than he means that we should abstain from Confession, till we have ten Thousand Confessor's at our service. The *number* and the *choice* are neither of them to be understood in the rigour of the expression: because it would then follow, that none but some few Soveraign Princes could ever be able to go to Confession, for want of *number* enough to *chuse* in. But nevertheless, this way of expressing is very proper to undeceive some people, who are not at all solicitous what

what Confeſſor they have; provided he be a man for their purpoſe, a man of their own humour, or a man who is eaſily prevail'd with, to let them do as they pleaſe. As for his *Charity*, they do not deſire it; his *Knowledge*, they do not want it; and his *Prudence* alſo may be ſpared, becauſe they have enough of their own. To oppoſe this pernicious maxim, our Saint aſſures us, *there are fewer to be found than men imagine, who are fit and capable of ſuch an Office; and that there is danger, if* by our fault *theſe parts are wanting in him*; that is, if we purpoſely make choice of a man, for this very reaſon, becauſe we believe him deficient in theſe excellent Qualities, and becauſe we are ſo proud and wilful that we cannot endure to deal with a man whoſe *Knowledge* and *Prudence* may enable him to *direct* us, or a

man whose *Charity* may easily inspire him with sufficient courage, when he is obliged, to *contradict* us. They who know their Passions are strong, and think their Reason is so too, are little desirous of being directed, and less of being contradicted. And therefore *B. Sales* takes notice that (e) *one of the last advices of the great S.* Lewis *to his Son, was in this kind: Confess often, and chuse a Confessor of learning and discretion, that can and dares advertise thee, to do such things as are necessary for thy Salvation.* If all the world would follow this advice, there would not be so many as there are, who purposely avoid those Confessors *who can and dare advertise* them. Their ignorance, when they mistake, is wilful and cannot excuse them: but on the contrary, they deserve

(e) *Ibid.* n. 1.

ſerve to be abandon'd in their darkneſs, becauſe they purpoſely took care to avoid the light.

2. *B. Sales* ſays not one ſyllable of a Penitent's being oblig'd to make a ſtrict enquiry into the Knowledge Charity and Prudence of a Confeſſor. He knew very well that ſuch a method would expoſe them to an infinity of raſh Judgments, and that God would never give a bleſſing to ſuch a way of proceeding. 'Tis true; we cannot help ſeeing and hearing: neither can we avoid thinking of what we ſee and hear: and, if the appearances are very great, we may make a reaſonable uſe of them, by way of a prudent caution: we may wiſely and ſafely chuſe the man who ſeems the better qualified and fitter for the Office: but all this while, we need not form a peremptory judgment in the caſe; and after all, we

may perhaps be grievously mistaken in the matter. For which reason *B. Sales* is so far from advising us to consider well the faults and imperfections of a Confessor, before we chuse him, that he only sends us to our Prayers, to (f) *demand him instantly at the hands of Almighty God*; and, *having once obtain'd him*, he bids us *bless his Divine Majesty for so great a benefit*. He tells us, that the way to find a good Confessor, is to (g) *fear God, and with an humble mind, affectuously desire* our *advancement in Piety*. He tells us, that we ought to *pray to God with very great instance*, to *furnish us with one according to his heart*. He tells us moreover, for our comfort, that, *although it were needful to send an Angel from Heaven, as he did to young* Tobias, *he will* not fail to supply our want, but that *he will* undoubtedly *give*

(f) *Ib.* n. 5. (g) *Ib.* n. 3.

give us *a good and faithful Guide.*

3. He expreſly teaches, that we (*h*) *ought to hearken to* our *Confeſſor, as to an Angel deſcended from Heaven, to conduct* us *thither*: And any man who has his thoughts about him, muſt needs perceive that, if this be true, the rules of *Leſſius* cannot poſſibly be falſe. For, if we were once aſſured of an *Angel* being ſent from Heaven to direct us,

I. We never could ſuppoſe that God, who ſent him, had permitted him to *miſtake* his meſſage, *unleſs we were* CERTAIN *of it.*

II. The reſpect we owe to an Ambaſſador from Heaven, would not ſuffer us to queſtion any of his orders, by *ſearching into the reaſons* and endeavouring to *know the cauſes* of them.

(h) *Ib.* n. 4.

III. Though *nothing* be *good* and perfect *but God*, yet nevertheleſs it would be a very abſurd thing, if we were *therefore leſs ready to obey him*, becauſe, with curious obſervation, we may poſſibly diſcover *imperfections*, even in an *Angel*.

My veneration for *S. F. Sales* has led me a great deal further than I firſt intended: but however it has not led me out of my way; becauſe I was going to prove, that the *practical certainty* which is grounded upon the ſure Authority of a Confeſſor, is *abſolute*; without requiring any terms on our ſide to ſupport it: whereas the other, which is grounded upon the Probability of ſpeculative reaſon, is only *conditional*, and always ſuppoſes ſome certain articles to be obſerv'd exactly on our part; ſo that *if* we fail in the performance of theſe conditions, all our appearances of practical certainty

tainty will never be ſufficient to excuſe us.

SECT. III.

When we depend upon the Probability of our own Reaſon, our Certainty is only Conditional.

IN the laſt Section I compared that *practical certainty*, which is grounded upon a Confeſſor's Authority, to a building which is raiſed upon a rock: But as for the other, which is grounded upon Probability, I cannot compare it better than to a building erected upon a floating Iſland. Such an edifice, may be made as ſtrong as one pleaſes, and as well compacted in it ſelf: but the foundation is naturally a little ſuſpicious; it may break; it may ſink; and either the one, or the other, is enough to ruine the inhabitants.

If the Foundation never fall to pieces, if it never be ſwallow'd up; All's well. But how ſhall a body do to be thoroughly ſatisfied concerning theſe matters? Such *if*'s as theſe are a little troubleſome to a man's thoughts; and very well deſerve to be conſider'd, before one ventures to dwell in ſuch a wandring and uncertain habitation.

For the better underſtanding of the whole matter, I ſhall endeavour to give a ſhort and familiar account of the common notions of Probability. There are two ſorts of it: the one, intrinſical; the other, extrinſical: Intrinſical Probability is when we conſider the *real merits* of the *cauſe*, the principles and conſequences of it, the arguments and reaſons which have a particular relation to it, or a natural connection with it. Extrinſical Probability is when we have no regard to any of theſe things, but

but only consider the *personal merits* of the *Author* who has credit with us. We have some particular reasons, best known to our selves, which make us think him wise and good, and the greater the appearances are of his being *wise* enough to *know* the truth, and *good* enough to *tell* it us sincerely, the greater is the probability of his Doctrine being true, and the more we are contented to rely upon it, without enquiring into the reasons of it. We suppose his reasons are *good*, because they are *his*, and because his *personal merits* are altogether forreign to the *merits of the cause*, therefore this sort of probability is call'd extrinsical.

When I speak of *Authors*, I mean *Books* as well as *Men*, For we converse with both, and value them more or less, according as we fancy they deserve it. Some there are, who are

much inclined to prefer the *dead* Authors before the *living* ones: But I am much afraid, they have no great reaſon for it. A *Book*, ſay they, is free from Paſſion Intereſt and Humour. Very true, it is ſo: and ſo is the *man* himſelf, when he is dead: But he was alive, when he was writing; and, for ought we know, his Paſſion Intereſt and Humour might be then alive, as well as he. Be it how it will, I am ſure the *living* Authors have ſome very conſiderable advantages over the *dead* ones. 1. The *living* can ſpeak for themſelves; and, if they are not rightly underſtood, they can explain the difficulty more clearly. The *dead* can ſpeak no more; and, if we do not underſtand the text, they are not now in a capacity of putting a comment in the margin. 2. We may acquaint a *living* Author with the particular circumſtances of our caſe;

caſe; but a *dead* one has no ears to hear us. We may read his Writings, and obſerve what general Doctrines he lays down before us: But, as there are few rules without ſome exceptions, we may ſtill be in a doubt; and, if we are, he is not able to reſolve us. So that upon the whole matter, there appears to be as much difference, as betwixt a Doctor and a Diſpenſatory. And I am very confident, that ſeveral people have loſt their lives by tampering with Diſpenſatories, who otherwiſe might have enjoy'd both life and health, if they had but, in time, conſulted their Doctor. In fine, whether the *Author* be living or dead, 'tis certain that we either conſider the merit of his reaſons, or the merit of his perſon. If we relie upon the merit of his arguments, having examin'd them, poſſeſs'd them, and made them our own; our probability is what

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they call *intrinsical*. But if we wave his reasons, and rely entirely upon the merit of his person, because we are perswaded that a *wise* man is not easily mistaken, nor a *good* man easily prevail'd upon to tell a lie, our probability is meerly *extrinsical*.

Let us now apply these notions to our present purpose. 'Tis certainly lawful to follow a probable opinion: and, whether the probability be intrinsical or extrinsical, 'tis no great matter, provided it be sufficient. We are only oblig'd to look before we leap, and to consider well the ground before we offer to go upon it. I have already explain'd the difficulty of examining, and the danger of chusing our opinion: I have also intimated, that any judicious person may easily make a very good shift to overcome the difficulty and the danger too; in confirmation of which,

I ſhall only add one plain reflection. We are not obliged to uſe any extraordinary care and diligence in conſidering and ſearching the probability of our opinion: 'tis enough that we proceed with the ſame ſeriouſneſs and induſtry of endeavour, which we commonly uſe in worldly affairs, ſuch as are of ſome importance to us. For example: If we ſeek truth with the ſame ardour and vigour, as we ſeek a temporal advantage; if we go to look for it, with as good a will as men go uſually to their markets or their fairs; if we are in as good earneſt, and as careful about it, as we are in driving a bargain; if we reject the plauſible ſuggeſtions of our paſſion, intereſt, or humour, as we do the flattering words and kind inſinuations of a perſon whom we verily believe to have a deſign of over-reaching us: If we do but this (and all this is no

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more than what we daily do) we need not fear: We are Secure.

Whenſoever a man has done as much as I have here deſcribed, the *lawfulneſs* of following his opinion is very *certain*, although the *truth* of it be only *probable*. He has a *practical certainty* that the thing is lawful *to him*, although he only has a *ſpeculative probability* of its being lawful *in it ſelf*. And this alone is enough to pacifie the minds of all conſiderate perſons: for they will eaſily aſſure themſelves of having done as much as I have here explain'd; and then, although their certainty be only *conditional*, yet being well aſſured of having performed the conditions, they are as ſafe and as much at eaſe, as if their certainty were *abſolute*.

But it is not ſo with ſcrupulous people who are always more or leſs confounded and amaz'd

maz'd with too much fear. Nothing but an *abſolute* certainty will do their work, a *conditional* one will never ſerve their turn. Neither is it any wonder, that Scrupuloſity and Probability can never agree; becauſe Probability is naturally more or leſs defective, and Scrupuloſity is always ſo uneaſy, ſo exceptious, ſo unreaſonable in its expectations, that it is impoſſible to pleaſe it. 'Tis a peeviſh ſort of Humour, which is always finding fault, and always ſuſpecting the worſt; and when things are as well as they need be, it quarrels with them becauſe they are not better than they can be. In theſe occaſions, Probability is blamed, without deſerving it. For, in moral doubts where ſpeculative certainty is not to be found, a reaſonable probability is as much as the matter will bear, 'tis as much as all our ſpeculations can diſcover, and

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therefore is a very good thing in it ſelf. But, as good as it is, it is not ſo good as Scrupuloſity would have it be. Scrupuloſity would fain be ſpeculatively certain; and Probability can never be ſo: and therefore they can never agree upon the point. Now, for my part, I cannot but look upon this, as a very extravagant humour: For, although a man may poſſibly be ſo covetous, as to wiſh he could make a groat of two-pence; yet however, 'tis evidently an unreaſonable thing, to refuſe a good two-pence, becauſe it is not worth a groat.

If ſcrupulous people could poſſibly content themſelves with a reaſonable proportion of Probability, there might be ſome hopes of their finding comfort in it. But they are ſo exceſſively fond of *certainty*, that they can never reſt without it; and would be almoſt ready to die with

deſpair,

deſpair, if they did not live in hopes of it. For this reaſon, they are ſo very buſy in ſearching for the *greateſt* probability, as being the neareſt to it: and indeed they are not to be blam'd for thinking that the *greateſt* is the *beſt*: but, on the contrary, they very much deſerve to be commended for being moſt pleaſed with it, and for making it part of their chief buſineſs to find it. But the truth is, all exceſs is blameable, even in things the moſt excellent: and the juſteſt cauſe in the world can never juſtifie the intemperance of any paſſion in the proſecution of it. Their fault lies in their being over-much concern'd, and being blinded with too much fear; which undoubtedly diſpleaſes God, as much as a loving confidence would pleaſe him. They are like a man, whoſe maſter ſends him to the Wood; *Go, fetch me*, ſays he, *the beſt ſtick you can find.* If he had ſaid, *a*

good

good one, the work had been eaſily done: but becauſe he ſaid, *the beſt*, therefore the poor man is ſo terribly afraid, he ſcarce knows where to turn himſelf: firſt, one ſtick pleaſes him: and then another; and another: the more variety he meets with, the more he is confounded with it; and, the more he is ſolicitous to chuſe the *beſt*, the leſs he is able to do it. Thus he wanders up and down, loſes his labour, loſes his patience, loſes himſelf; and, by the time that he has found himſelf again, he has loſt his Maſters favour, by ſtaying ſo very long, and chuſing the worſt ſtick at laſt.

This immoderate ſolicitude were yet more pardonable, if when they find the probability they ſeek for, they would perſwade themſelves to be contented with it. But the ſame cowardly Spirit which puzzels them in the purſuit of it, does

as much diſcourage them even when they think they have found it. When they have overtaken it, and ſee it fall quite ſhort of their beloved certainty, they reckon all their labour loſt, and are as much unſatisfied as ever. They are utterly diſappointed in their expectation. They thought to arrive at ſpeculative certainty by the way of probability: But they only wearied themſelves with trying the experiment, and found themſelves as much miſtaken, as little children are, who looking upwards from the bottom of a great mountain, are apt to imagine 'tis as high as Heaven; and that, if they were once at the top of it, they could touch the Skie with their hands: Pleas'd with the fancy, they reſolve to try: but the higher they climb, the leſs hopes they have, and when they come there, they find the Skie as much

much above their Heads as ever.

'Tis in vain to tell ſuch ſcrupulous perſons that, although *Innocent* XI. has condemn'd the (*i*) *leaſt* probability, yet *Alexander* VIII. has approved the (*k*) *greateſt*. Nor is it to any purpoſe to talk to them of a middle way, and to let them know there are degrees of *greater* and *leſſer* betwixt the two extreams of *leaſt* and *greateſt*. If you tell them that, although the *leſſer* be warmly diſputed, yet both parties are agreed that the *greater* is ſufficient. All this will never pacifie their minds: becauſe the *greateſt* probability is always mixt with ſome little degree

(*i*) Generatim dum probabilitate, ſive intrinſeca, ſive extrinſeca, quantumvis tenui, modo a probabilitatis finibus non exeatur, confiſi aliquid agimus, ſemper prudenter agimus. *Prop.* 3. *inter* 65. (*k*) Non licet ſequi opinionem, vel inter probabiles probabiliſſimam. *Prop.* 3. *inter* 31.

degree of uncertainty; and this uncertainty though never ſo little, is a breach which they find wide enough for thouſands of fears to enter, and ruſh in upon them. Their fears are as unaccountable as thoſe of little Children, who are terrified with wonderful ſtories of Apparitions and Spirits: though you ſhut the door as cloſe as ever you can, yet if once they get a fancy in their head, that the bugbears can creep in at the Key-hole, they'l quake and tremble as much, as if the door were wide open.

'Tis no leſs in vain to aſſure them that, although the caſe in queſtion *may be* ſinful and unlawful *in it ſelf*, yet having taken ſuch pains to find the truth, it is impoſſible that this *may-be* ſhould ever do them the leaſt harm: becauſe, although their probability falls ſhort of ſpeculative certainty, yet they are

practically

practically certain that the caſe is innocent and lawful *to them*, *if* they have not been *negligent* in examining in it, or *if* they have not been *partial* in approving it. A Security upon doubtful conditions, is no Security at all; and the conditions here ſpecified, are always doubtful to them. Alas! They never think themſelves ſufficiently *Sincere* and *Diligent*: and therefore theſe *if*'s can never comfort them, becauſe theſe *if*'s are the very things they are ſo much afraid of. Their firſt apprehenſions are, that the things perhaps *may be* unlawful *in it ſelf*. Afterwards, when they begin to aim at a *conditional* certainty, and to conſider well the aforeſaid *if*'s; their fears are now doubled, inſtead of their being double-guarded from them. They are now allarm'd with freſh recruits of new-rais'd reaſons, which aſſault them in two ſeveral places at

at once, and with greater numbers than before. And now their thoughts are buſie and uneaſy with endleſs doubts and ſuſpicions, that *may-be* they have been *negligent*, and *may-be* they have been *partial*. So that all the comfort, which their *conditional* certainty affords them, ſerves only to furniſh them with *two may-be's* inſtead of *one*, which is juſt a down-right Tinkering of the matter, by mending *one* hole and making *two* in the place of it. And therefore I need not add a word more, to prove that the *abſolute* practical certainty, which is grounded upon the ſure Authority of a Confeſſor, is the better certainty of the two, and much more favourably calculated for the eaſe and comfort of a Timorous Conſcience.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Objections of pretended Conſcience anſwer'd.

'TIs high time now to anſwer the objections of pretended Conſcience. I call it *pretended*, becauſe it goes by a name which it does not really deſerve, a name which is none of its own. 'Tis a *pretence* which people make uſe of, when they have a mind to *think* what they *will*, and *do* what they *pleaſe*. A *pretence*, by which they cheat themſelves, as well as their Neighbours; and endeavour to avoid private remorſes, as well as publick cenſures, by calling upon the ſacred name of *Conſcience*.

The main objection, which gives ground to all the reſt, is this. *Although the practiſe be lawful in it ſelf, yet, if I* think really *it is a Sin, my* thinking

ſo

ſo *is it not enough to* make *it a Sin?*

In anſwer to this, I frankly own, that *Conſcience*, rightly underſtood, is the true Judge of our Actions: but ſcrupulous perſons are grievouſly miſtaken in it. All their ſpeculations paſs for *Conſcientious*: all their upſtart fancies uſurp the title of *Conſcience*: Humility, Obedience, and all the train of Vertues which attend them, muſt now and then be turned out of doors, to make room for a Sin-making thought, which they are pleas'd to dignifie with the venerable Character of *Conſcience*. The Government of Reaſon would be a pretty ſort of a thing indeed, if every thought, which occurs to our mind, were the right rule of our morality. It would be juſt like a non-ſenſical Monarchy, where every body is King *de jure*. 'Tis true; our Conſcience is

always our immediate Judge: but then there is ſcarce one *thought* in a hundred, which is really our *Conſcience*: and, if they are not our Conſcience, 'tis no matter *what* they are, or *how many*. There may ariſe in our minds a thouſand of them (if you pleaſe) one after another; and every one of theſe *thoughts* may *really think* it *is a Sin*; and yet, if *it is not* a Sin *in it ſelf*, theſe *thoughts* will never be able to *make* it *a Sin*.

Well. But how ſhall I diſcern that thought, *which is my* Conſcience, *from all thoſe which are not?*

How do you know the difference betwixt the *Judge* who ſits upon the Bench, and the *Lawyers* who plead at the Bar? We have every one of us a Court of *Judicature* within us, where all our doubtful caſes are Try'd and Judg'd. All our *thoughts*

thoughts which are concern'd in any thing belonging to the *Trial*, are ſummon'd to appear in *Court*. Our *ſpeculative Thoughts* are the *Lawyers*, which open the Caſe, explain the circumſtances of it, and propoſe the reaſons which are either for it or againſt it. Whilſt the matter is thus under debate, our *Thoughts* are divided upon the point: One way, they plead *it is a Sin*; the other way, they plead *it is not*. Mean time, theſe *thoughts* are meerly *ſpeculative*; becauſe they are not rules to walk by, but are only the opinion of the *Lawyers*, whoſe buſineſs is to *diſpute* the queſtion, and not to *decide* it. Amongſt all the *Thoughts* which are employ'd in the whole Trial, there is only *One*, which finally determines and judges the Caſe. This *Thought* is *practical*, becauſe it is the *Opinion* of the *Judge*, the *Sentence* of the *Court*, and

the *Rule* of our *Practiſe*. And *This* is the only *Thought* which deſerves the name of *Conſcience*.

I purpoſely make uſe of this Alluſion, to avoid School-terms; becauſe I write for thoſe who commonly are not well acquainted with them. And, for the better underſtanding of the main point, I ſhall endeavour to give a familiar account of three general caſes which uſually occur in the aforeſaid Trial.

I. It happens ſometimes, that the Lawyers, who plead *it is a Sin*, are able to prove it ſo plauſibly, and with ſuch ſtrong appearance of Reaſon, that the adverſe party is quite confounded and ſilenc'd. And then indeed, the Court being free from noiſe, the *Judge*'s voice may eaſily be heard: and we may be aſſur'd it is our *Conſcience* which tells us, *it is* certainly *a Sin*.

II. Some-

II. Sometimes it happens that the *Lawyers*, who plead it *Lawful*, have the greater probability on their ſide: But yet the others are obſtinate in maintaining the probability of its being *a Sin*. In this occaſion, there is a great noiſe in Court: The *Judge* pronounces *ſentence*, that the thing *is lawful*: The *Lawyers* are impertinent, and the ſame time cry, *it is a Sin*: And in this confuſion we may eaſily miſtake a *Lawyer*'s voice, and think it is the *Judge*'s. Our *Conſcience* thinks it *lawful*: and at the ſame time theſe unmannerly *Thoughts* continue clamorous, and ſtill *think really* it is *a Sin*. But let them ſtill *think* on; as long, and as *really*, as they pleaſe; 'tis certain they are never able to make it *really* be one.

III. At other times it commonly happens, that the *Lawyers*, who plead it *lawful*, although they have great Proba-

bility on their ſide, yet they do not inſiſt upon it: they wave all probable reaſons, as being more or leſs defective: and only ground their defence upon a *practical principle*, which is an undoubted maxim of the Law, that *in all doubtful caſes one may ſecurely relie upon* a *Confeſſor's Authority, without examining* the *reaſons*. In this caſe, the *Lawyers* who plead *it is a Sin*, are baffled and quite put out of countenance. As for *ſpeculative certainty*, which now is neceſſary to gain their point, they frankly own they have it not about them; And, as for *probability*, although they have abundance of it, yet the beſt being manifeſtly *uncertain*, the others deſpiſe it, and will not take the pains to anſwer it, but only oppoſe the *certain rule* of a Confeſſor's *Authority* againſt it. When things are in this poſture, the Trial is ſoon ended.

Our

Our *Conſcience* immediatly pronounces *Sentence*, that the thing *is certainly lawful*: and the Equity of this Sentence is ſo viſible, that 'tis impoſſible to be miſtaken in it.

According to theſe three caſes, 'tis eaſy to give a ſhort and plain Anſwer to the Queſtion here propoſed: *If I* think really *it is a Sin, is not my* thinking ſo *enough to make it a Sin?*

1. In the *firſt* caſe, you *think* 'tis *certainly a Sin*; you do not doubt the leaſt but that it is ſo: And then indeed, although it be not a Sin *in it ſelf*, this *thought*, as long as it continues *thus* certain, *is enough to make it one.*

2. In the *ſecond* caſe, you have two *thoughts* in your mind at once: one way, you think it *lawful*; the other way, you think it *a Sin*: And, if the firſt *Thought* be your *Conſci-*

ence, the ſecond cannot make it a Sin. But if you are not able to diſcern, which of the two *thoughts* is the dictate of your *Conſcience*, you muſt be content to ſuffer the *mortification* of being in a *doubt*, whether it be *enough* to make *it a Sin*, or not. But you have ſtill this comfort left, that

3. In the *third* caſe, when you lay aſide all theſe uncertain probabilities, and ground your ſelf entirely upon the ſure Authority of your Confeſſor, this *mortifying doubt* is eaſily and clearly reſolv'd. For, whilſt your *Conſcience* relies upon the *certainty* of his Authority who tells you *it is lawful*, 'tis manifeſt that all your other *thoughts* can never be *enough to make it a Sin*. They may be clamorous, they may be troubleſome, they may affright you with more or leſs probability of its being *unlawful*: But as long as you rely upon

upon a *certain rule*, which always is a juſt excuſe, and always makes your practice *certainly* lawful *to you*; What ſignifie the vain appearances of *probability*, which always is *uncertain*, and never can amount to more than this, that *perhaps* 'tis really unlawful *in it ſelf*? Will any body in their right ſenſes, quit a *certain* hold, to faſten upon a meer *perhaps*?

But may I then ſafely follow my Confeſſor's Advice, when my own opinion ſeems to me more probable?

Who doubts it? His Advice is a *certain* rule: your opinion contrary to it, though never ſo probable, is ſtill *uncertain*: And therefore 'tis an undoubted Truth, that you may (*l*) ſafely follow his advice.

(*l*) Parum refert quod oppoſita ſententia ipſi operanti videatur probabilior ſpeculative: Speculativum enim illud judicium, eo ipſo quod

But what if I am ſtill uneaſy in my ſelf, and terribly afraid it is a Sin? May I ſecurely follow his Advice, in ſpite of all my fears?

Undoubtedly you may. Is it not evident, that we may always follow a *certain rule*, in ſpite of all the *uncertainties* in the world? And have not we juſt reaſon to (*m*) contemn our fears,

ſorte *incertum* & falſum ſit, non debet eſſe regula operationis; cum operans aliam regulam, eamque *certam* habeat, quam ſequatur, *Buſenbaum.* l. 1. tr. 1. c. 2. dub. 2. Quando Religioſus dubitat utrum, ſua infirmitas ſufficiat ad non jejunandum, vel ad non legendum horas; non ſolum ad mandatum, ſed etiam *conſilium* ſui Prælati *ſecure* poteſt abſtinere a jejunio, vel ab horis. *Sylvius.* in 1. 2. q. 19. a. 5. d. 8. c. 1. Prælato præcipienti Religioſus *tenetur* obedire contra ſuam propriam opinionem, etiamſi *probabiliorem.* ibid. d. 9. c. 4. (*m*) Poteſt firmiter operari *contempto* ſcrupulo, etiamſi *perſeveret. Suarez.* in 1. 2. diſp. 12. ſect. 4. n. 5.

fears, when we are sure of being more afraid than hurt?

My fears, you'l say, *are grounded upon a great many particular reasons: And is it not an unreasonable thing to turn these reasons out of doors, without first confuting them?*

Pray, is it not an unreasonable thing to undertake the needless labour of an endless work? Are they not abundantly *confuted* by their own confession? They only boast their *probability*; they do not so much as pretend to a *speculative certainty*: And nothing less than *that* can ever be allow'd to take place of a *certain* practical direction.

The whole truth of the business is this. Our *speculative thoughts* are proud and impertinent. They would fain usurp the whole conduct of our life and actions: and this is what they were never made for. They are like a factious House of

of Commons, who are always quarrelling with the King's Prerogatives, under the odious name of Arbitrary Power: and if care be not taken to keep them within their due limits, they'l ſoon ſubvert the Government: they'l convene without being call'd, and continue ſitting even when they are prorogued. From whence it plainly follows, that that our *Practical Reaſon* is never more Prudent, and more like it ſelf, in the lawful exerciſe of its Soveraign Power, than when it ſilences and diſmiſes theſe pragmatical Scruples and rebellious Speculations, which cannot endure to have *Authority* reign over them. Then it is that our Practical Reaſon is like an Abſolute Monarch, who governs as he pleaſes, without conſulting his Parliament. And here, I hope you will not ſay, that *Reaſon* is *Tyrannical*, unleſs you have

have a mind to have it ſaid, that *Tyranny* is *reaſonable.*

CHAP. XI.

The Security of Blind Obedience proved by Scripture.

A Pretended Conſcience which claims a *liberty* of *thinking* what it pleaſes, and pleads a *neceſſity* of *doing* what it thinks, is as miſchievous a Tool as the Devil himſelf would wiſh to go to work with. All the Laws of God and his Church would ſignifie juſt nothing, if every body might pretend to ſay, *My Conſcience tells me another thing*, and *who ſhall controle or judge my Conſcience?* 'Tis evident that whenſoever the *Law* ſays one thing, and our *pretended Conſcience* takes upon it to ſay another, or whenſoever there ariſes any diſpute, which of the two is in the right, we do not live in conformity

to

to the *Law*, if we *deſpiſe* ſuch *Judges* of the Law, as the Law it ſelf has appointed.

My buſineſs therefore at preſent is to prove by *Scripture*, that *our Confeſſor's are appointed by God, to be the Judges of the Law.* From whence 'twill clearly follow, that *in all doubtful caſes we may ſecurely relie upon our Confeſſor's Authority, without examining their reaſons.* For ſurely nothing can be more ſelf-evident than this, that *the Law of God can never puniſh us, for ſubmitting humbly and ſincerely to thoſe Judges, which God himſelf has appointed.*

There are ſeveral Texts of *Scripture* which plainly repreſent unto us, how unfitting and how unſafe a thing it is, to take upon us to be our own judges in all things. (n) *Rely not upon your own Underſtanding: Be not wiſe in your own eyes.* And again(o) *There*

(n) *Prov.* 3. 5. 7. (o) *Prov.* 26. 12.

There is more hope of a fool, than of one that is wise in his own conceit. Such expressions as these are very proper to awaken some people, who are so strangely fond of their own fancies, that they cannot endure to submit them to any Confessor whatsoever. They love dearly to *rely upon their own understanding* in every thing, although the Word of God expressly advises the contrary. They are so *Wise in their own eyes*, that they never think their Confessor wise enough to direct them. And, let them say what they will, 'tis manifest they are not guilty of too much Humility. For, if they thought their *conceits* were *silly*, they would easily submit. But the true reason why they are so stiff in their opinions, is because they always are inclin'd to believe that their *conceits* are *wise* ones. And how does this agree with the Word

of

of God, which in (p) both Teſtaments admoniſhes them not to be *wiſe in their own conceits?* But a word is enough to the *wiſe*; and therefore I ſhall ſay no more upon this ſubject, but ſhall chiefly inſiſt upon thoſe Texts, which tell us plainly who they are, whom God has appointed to be our Guides and Judges: our Guides, to chuſe our way, and our Judges to determine all our doubts concerning it.

1. *The* (q) *lips of the Prieſt ſhall keep Knowledge, and they ſhall ſeek the Law at his mouth: for he is the Angel of the Lord of Hoſts.* And the reaſon holds good, although his wickedneſs (which God forbid) ſhould (r) *make* him *contemptible before the people.* His perſonal failings do not leſſen the Authority of his Character. He may *know* the Law

(p) *Prov.* 26. 12. *Rom.* 12, 16.
(q) *Malach.* 2. 7. (r) *ib.* v. 9.

Law as well as thoſe who *obſerve* it. And although his Actions diſcover the corruption of his *Heart* which contradicts his *Judgment*, yet perhaps he may not labour under any temptation of belying the Law with his *lips*, or contradicting it with his *mouth*. In the old Teſtament we read that (s) *when* Samuel *was old* and *made his Sons Judges over* Iſrael, *they walk'd not in his ways*; for which reaſon *the Elders of* Iſrael, being offended at the wickedneſs of his Sons, *gather'd themſelves together, and came to* Samuel, *and ſaid, Now make us a King to judge us, like all the Nations.* Whereupon *Samuel*, being *diſpleas'd* with their petition, *pray'd* to God to direct him, and God himſelf expreſs'd his diſpleaſure in theſe terms, *They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I ſhould not reign over them.* And in

(s) 1 *Kings.* 8. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

in the new Teſtament we read, that *Jeſus ſaid to the multitude* (t) *the Scribes and Phariſees have ſitten in* Moſes *ſeat*; *All therefore whatſoever they ſay to ye, that obſerve ye, and do ye; but do not* ſquare your actions *according to their works; for they ſay, and do not.* And indeed our Natural Reaſon is enough to teach us the Equity of this Truth. For, when once a Judge is appointed by the Law, although a private perſon at the Bar may juſtly hope himſelf to the better man of the two; yet, if he ſhould therefore offer to juſtle him off the Bench, and diſown the Authority of his Commiſſion, ſuch an inſolence would never be endur'd in any Form of Government.

II. *He* (u) *that hears you*, ſays *Chriſt* to his Diſciples, *hears me*: *and he that deſpiſes you, deſpiſes me.* This Text ſhews plainly

(t) *Matth.* 23. 1, 2, 3. (u) *Luk.* 10. 16.

plainly that (w) *God who ſpoke in time paſt, to the Fathers by the Prophets*, and *in theſe laſt days ſpoke unto us by his Son*, now ſtill continues ſpeaking to us by our Confeſſors, who though they (x) *are not ſufficient of themſelves*, yet *God has made* them *able Miniſters of the New Teſtament*; (y) *and has committed to* them *the word of Reconciliation*, ſo that we ought to look upon them as *Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as if God* himſelf *did exhort* us *by* them. If we had been preſent at the Transfiguration of our Saviour, and had heard that (z) *voice which came out of the cloud, ſaying, This is my beloved Son, hear him*: What a mighty influence would it have had upon our Minds and Hearts? And ought not we as much to reverence the voice of *Chriſt*, as if we heard a voice from *Heaven*? When

(w) *Heb.* 1. 1. (x) 2 *Cor.* 3. 5, 6.
(y) 2 *Cor.* 5. 19, 20. (z) *Luk.* 9. 35.

When our Saviour tells us, *He that hears* my Miniſters, *hears me*; although our fears may raiſe a miſt, and quite ſurround us with a cloud, yet ſtill theſe words of his are like a *Voice out of the cloud*, and a Voice as eaſy to be underſtood, as if he had ſaid, *Theſe are my beloved Miniſters, Hear them.*

I ſhall only take notice of one particular circumſtance, which I hope will help to make ſome people ſenſible of the importance of this Text. I mean thoſe who are ſo ſtrangely terrified with thinking, that their Confeſſions never are exact, that they never love God above all things, that they never do ſufficient Pennance for their Sins, that they are not in the State of Grace, and that they are not in the number of God's Elect. If they are ſo terribly afraid of being (a) *like Sheep* which are *going aſtray*; if

(a) 1 *Pet.* 2. 25.

if they are ſincerely deſirous *to return unto the Shepherd of their Souls*; Let them hearken ſeriouſly to the voice of (*b*) *that great Shepherd of the Sheep*, who ſays, (*c*) *I am the good Paſtor.* (*d*) *My Sheep*, ſays he, *hear my voice, and they follow me.* We cannot *follow Chriſt* unleſs we *hear his voice:* But, if we *hear his voice*, and *follow* it, This is the certain mark, that we are in the number of his Sheep. *My Sheep hear my voice, and they follow me*; (*e*) *and I give unto them Eternal Life*; *and they ſhall not periſh for ever*; *neither ſhall any one pull them out of my Father's hand. My Father, that which he hath given me, is greater than all: and no one is able to pull them out of my Father's hand.* What a comfort is it, to be thus aſſured, that if we *hear his voice*, and *follow* it, he will not

(*b*) *Heb.* 13. 20. (*c*) *Jo.* 10. 14. (*d*) *ib. v.* 27. (*e*) *ib. v.* 28, 29.

not fail to *give* us *Eternal* Life! What a joy, to think that we *ſhall never periſh*! And how does it tranſport and raviſh us, when we conſider that although the World, the Fleſh, and all the Devils in in Hell conſpire againſt us, yet our *Father in Heaven is greater than all*, and, if we *hear the voice* of his *Son*, *no one* will ever be *able to pull us out of our Father's hand?* What would we give, what would we do, what would we ſuffer, to be ſure that we are in the happy number of thoſe who *hear the voice* of *Chriſt?* Remember therefore, and conſider what he ſays; *If you hear* his Miniſters, *you hear* him; and if you *deſpiſe* them, you *deſpiſe* him.

III. *When* our Saviour *aſcended* (f) *he gave Paſtors and Teachers*, not only *for the work of the Miniſtry*, and *for the edifying the body of Chriſt*, but alſo *that we hence-*

(f) *Epheſ.* 4. 8, 11, 12, 14.

henceforth be no more Children, toſs'd to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine. And certainly, unleſs they were appointed by *Chriſt* to be our Guides and Judges, 'tis very hard to underſtand, how they ſhould hinder us from being *toſs'd to and fro, and carried about with* what *wind of Doctrine* we pleaſe. But the thing which here is moſt remarkable, is this: Before he *went* (g) *his way to him that ſent* him, he ſaid, *I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away.* Which words being extended to the generality of the Faithful, to whom the *Comforter* was *ſent* as well as to the Diſciples, 'tis hard to forbear the ſtarting of a very material queſtion: How? is it *expedient for us* to exchange an *infallible* Guide, for a company of Confeſſors, who are every one of them *fallible?* Yes. It certainly

(g) Jo. 15. 5, 7.

tainly is ſo. For, 1. Our Submiſſion is *equally ſecure*, and that's as good: 2. Our Obedience is *more humble*, and that's a great deal better.

If you ask me, by what Authority we can be *ſo ſecure* under the direction of a fallible Guide? Pray, is not *his* Authority ſufficient who will, one day, *come to judge the quick and the dead*? Can you imagine, he is ſo unjuſt, as to condemn us for ſubmitting humbly and ſincerely to *his* own *Authority*? And, if he cannot poſſibly condemn us for it, are we not *ſecure*? 'Tis he himſelf (who knows a great deal better than we do, how fallible they are) 'tis He, I ſay, who has appointed them to be our Judges; and therefore 'tis by his appointment, that in doubtful matters we ſubmit our judgment to them. Hear what he ſays himſelf: (*b*) *As my*

(*b*) *Jo* 20. 21, 23.

my Father hath ſent me, even ſo I ſend them. *Whoſe ſoever Sins* they *remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſe ſoever Sins* they *retain, they are retain'd.*

I ſhall add no gloſs to this Text. The *Church of God* is the beſt interpreter of his *Word.* She is (*i*) *the pillar and the ground of Truth.* If we believe our *Creed*; if we believe the *Holy Catholick Church*; If we believe the ſolemn declaration of a *General Council* approved and univerſally receiv'd, there is nothing more certain than that our *Confeſſor's* are by *Chriſt* appointed *Judges* to diſcern and to determine all matters belonging to Confeſſion. The words of the Council of *Trent* are theſe. (*k*) *Our Lord*

(i) 1 *Tim.* 3. 15. (k) Dominus noſter Jeſus Chriſtus, a terris aſcenſurus ad cœlos, Sacerdotes, ſui ipſius Vicarios reliquit, tanquam præſides & judices, ad quos omnia mortalia crimina deferantur; quo, pro pote-

JESUS CHRIST before he aſcended from Earth to Heaven, left Prieſts his Vicegerents, as Preſidents and Judges, to whom all mortal Sins are to be declared, that they may accordingly pronounce Sentence. So plain it is, that our Ghoſtly Fathers have their *Commiſſion* from *God*, and *Patent* from his *Church*, to be our *Judges* in matters of *Conſcience*; and conſequently to *pronounce* a final *Sentence* upon all our *doubtful caſes*.

ſtate Clavium remiſſionis aut retentionis pecatorum, ſententiam pronuncient, *Seſſ.* 14. cap. 5.

CHAP. XII.

Maxims of S. Bernard, *concerning Blind Obedience.*

I Have now done with *Scripture*: and, to give an account of the *Fathers*, I have made choice of S. *Bernard*, whom I look upon as the laſt Father of the Church, and the beſt able to expreſs the ſentiments of all the reſt who went before him. His eminent Learning and Vertue were the Oracle as well as Miracle of the twelfth Age. His Doctrine and Example were the great Inſtruction and the Admiration of all: when in the darkneſs and the coldneſs of thoſe times, which were the winter-ſeaſon of Devotion, He unexpectedly appear'd, like *fire* expreſly *ſent* from Heaven to enlighten and enflame the minds

and hearts of ignorant and tepid Chriſtians.

He has written a whole Book particularly upon this ſubject: and, the whole care of his life being chiefly employed in cultivating and improving the *Vertue* of *Blind Obedience*, we may very well allow him to have rightly underſtood it. He diſcourſes, for the moſt part, concerning the Blind Obedience which is due to a *Prelate* or *Superior*, addreſſing himſelf particularly to *Religious* perſons, who by vow are bound to obſerve it. But nevertheleſs the Submiſſion, which is due from all Penitents to their Confeſſors, is a Caſe exactly parallel to it, and is directly comprehended under the general notion of it. And beſides, 'tis obvious to every body's common ſenſe, that thoſe practiſes which are univerſally reputed vertuous in a Cloiſter, can never be juſtly cenſur'd as unlawful

in

in the World : but whatſoever the Religious *muſt* do, the Seculars *may* lawfully do it, if they pleaſe.

MAX. I.

We ought to look upon our Confeſſor as a Vicegerent of God, without conſidering his faults.

WHether (*l*) it be God, or Man his Vicegerent, who impoſes an obligation upon us, we are to obey with the ſame care, and ſubmit with the ſame reſpect. (*m*) What matter is it,

(*l*) Sive Deus, ſive homo Vicarius Dei, mandatum quodcunque tradiderit ; pari profecto obſequendum eſt cura, pari reverentia deferendum. S. *Bern.* lib. de præcept. & diſpen. cap. 9. (*m*) Quid enim intereſt, utrum per ſe an per ſuos miniſtros, ſive homines ſive Angelos, hominibus innoteſcat ſuum placitum Deus ? Quamobrem quicquid vice Dei præcipit homo,

whether God impart his will and pleaſure to us, by himſelf, or by the Miniſtry of Men, or Angels? Whatſoever it is that Man preſcribes, as Vicegerent of God, unleſs it be CERTAINLY *diſpleaſing to him, we ought to accept it in the ſame manner, as if God himſelf had ordain'd it. Eſpecially ſince we read in Scripture, that the lips of the Prieſt keep knowledge, and they require the Law at his mouth, becauſe he*

mo, quod non ſit *certum* diſplicere Deo; haud ſecus omnino accipiendum quam ſi præcipiat Deus. Præſertim cum teneas de Scripturis, quia Labia Sacerdotis cuſtodiunt ſcientiam, & legem de ore ejus requirunt; quia Angelus Domini exercituum eſt. Requirunt, dixerim, Legem; non quam ratio manifeſta probaverit, ſed quod ita latere aut obſcurum eſſe cognoſcitur, ut in *dubium* venire poſſit, utrumne Deus ſic an aliter forte velit, ſi non de labiis cuſtodientibus ſcientiam, & ex ore Angeli Domini exercituum *certum* reddatur. *ibid.*

he is the Angel of the Lord of Hosts. They seek the law, says he, *not in things which our Reason proves* MANIFESTLY *to us, but in matters which are so hidden and obscure, that we might possibly* DOUBT, *whether God would have it so, or not; unless it were* MADE CERTAIN, *by those lips which are the Keepers of Knowledge, and by the mouth of the Angel of the Lord of Hosts.* Can any man speak more plainly than S. *Bernard* does, upon this occasion?

And now, perhaps, some body may be apt to say; if I had but such a man as S. *Bernard*, for my Confessor, I could rely upon his word as confidently as if God himself had said it: but when I consider the weakness and the indiscretion of my Ghostly Father, I dare not venture to trust him.

To this Objection a learned Divine returns this Answer, that Penitents do not rely upon their Confessor (*n*) *because he is* LEARNED, PRUDENT, *or* VERTUOUS, *but barely because he supplies the place of God*, who has appointed him to be their Judge in all doubtful matters relating to Confession. But since you own so frankly, that if you had S. *Bernard* for your Confessor, you could easily rely upon him: Hear what S. *Bernard* says himself. (*o*) *Be not afrighted at the un-*

(*n*) Dicet fortasse quispiam, si talis mihi esset Prælatus, qual s erat S *Bernardus*, facile acquiescerem: nunc vero dum Superioris mei parvam sapientiam aspicio, non audeo ei acquiescere. R. Inferiores non obediunt Prælato, quia sit *doctus*, quia *prudens*, quia *Sanctus*, sed quia vicem Dei gerit, hoc ipso quo est legitimus superior. *Sylvius*. in 1. 2. q. 19. a. 5. d. 12. c. 8. (*o*) Non te moveat Magister imperitus, indiscreta potestas; sed memen-

unskilfulneſs of his Teaching, or the indiſcretion of his Authority; but remember that there is no power but of God; and that they who reſiſt Authority, reſiſt the ordinance of God.

'Tis true, This Maxim of *S. Bernard* allows of one exception from the general rule, which is, that when we are *abſolutely certain* of our Confeſſor's being miſtaken, we may lawfully refuſe to ſubmit to him.(p) *In theſe things*, ſays he, *we neither expect any body's Teaching, nor mind any body's Forbidding.* But here it is that all Timorous Conſciences muſt have a great care, of not *being miſtaken* themſelves, when they think their Confeſſor *is ſo.* The *Exception* is very true, but

to quia non eſt poteſtas niſi a Deo, & qui reſiſtit poteſtati, reſiſtit Dei ordinationi. S. *Bern.* Serm. 41. de diverſis. (p) De hujuſmodi nec præceptor expectandus, nec prohibitor inſcultandus eſt. S. *Bern.* lib. de præcep. & diſpen. cap. 9.

they muſt be careful not to deſtroy the *Rule* with it. They are apt to fear on the wrong ſide; and fear is a ſtrange Paſſion, which commonly miſrepreſents whatever comes in its way. They look at every thing with a pair of ſpectacles made of falſe glaſſes, the one magnifying the Sin, the other multiplying the circumſtances, and both conſpiring to deceive them. In this condition they conſult their Confeſſor, and tell him a terrible Story, which by their good will, they would never make an end of. Their Confeſſor, who is generally well acquainted with theſe humours, and ſoon ſees what they would be at, begins to cut them ſhort: And 'tis no wonder he does ſo, becauſe he ſees things plainly, with his own natural eyes, and will not be prevail'd upon to uſe their ſpectacles, becauſe he knows what glaſs they are made of.

Now

Now, this offends them ſtrangely; and without any more adoe, they think they have all the reaſon in the world to conclude, he's *certainly* miſtaken. He allows them, may be, only half a quarter to examine; and they are *certain* that three or four hours are too little, for the purpoſe. They are *certain* they ought to confeſs ſome things, which he forbids them to ſpeak of. They are *certain* they are obliged in Conſcience, to make a general Confeſſion; although he tells them, they need it no more than they do the Head-ake.

Poor Creatures! In theſe perplexities they *mean* very well; but they *do* very ill. For, even in things which ſeem evident to them, they ought to beware of being miſtaken, and of making things matter of Conſcience which are far from being ſo. They ought to beware the ſetting

ting up of a falſe God to themſelves, and ſacrificing all the Duties of Obedience to an Idol of their own invention. Their pretended Conſcience is neither better nor truer for the heat and zeal with which they maintain it. Even Heathens themſelves are oftentimes more zealous than Chriſtians: And (the Devil helping his ſervants) it is commonly obſerv'd, that men are fiercer in the wrong than in the right. Who would ſet up a fallible Guide againſt an infallible one? This Conſcience of theirs is fallible, not only *in it ſelf*, but alſo *to them*; becauſe when, by their fault, it is erroneous, it does not excuſe them. But their Confeſſor is always infallible *to them*, although he never is ſo *in himſelf*; becauſe it is infallibly true, that they are always excuſed, when in any doubt they humbly and ſincerely follow his advice.

When

When nothing elſe will do, they chiefly inſiſt upon this; that they are very *certain* their Confeſſor does not rightly underſtand them, becauſe they are ſure that, if he did, he would certainly be of their opinion. But ſurely ſuch a pleaſant argument as this, is little better than that of Poet *Bayes*. *When I have a mind*, ſays he, *to know whether a man be a man of parts, or not; What do me I, but give him one of my Plays to read? He reads it. If he likes it; Well. If not; I know what to think of him.* Much at this rate, theſe people go to their Confeſſor, with one of their huge and mighty Scruples. He hears it. If he approves their opinion; All's well. If not; They know for *certain* he muſt needs be grievouſly miſtaken.

'Tis very hard, you'l ſay, *for people to think otherwiſe: Eſpecially when they can* almoſt *ſwear, they are in the right.*

The

The prouder they are, the harder it is: but if they were ſufficiently humble, it would be a very eaſy matter. Eſpecially, when they cannot quite *ſwear*. For if their heart goes *pit a pat* with fear of being perjur'd, when they think of laying hand upon the Book and making a ſolemn Oath; Then they may very well aſſure themſelves, that there is ſtill ſome little doubt lies lurking in their Minds, and that therefore they may boldly reckon it amongſt the doubtful caſes, in which their Confeſſor has full Commiſſion to direct them.

S. *Teresa* was certainly ſo fully perſwaded of her Viſions being true and real, that ſhe could *almoſt* have ſworn, they were ſo: And yet ſhe would not therefore venture to diſobey her Confeſſor. Hear how *F. Craſſet* deſcribes her behaviour in this caſe.

(*q*) *JE-*

(q) *JESUS appear'd to S.* Teresa *two several ways; in his own person, and in the person of her Confessor.* Jesus *himself teaches her infallible truths: Her Confessor, who represents him, tells her, they are so many lies. What shall* Teresa *do? Whom shall she believe? She never deliberates upon the matter: She chuses rather to obey* Jesus *in the person of her Confessor, than in his own person. I may be mistaken,* says she, *in believing those Visions; but I shall never be mistaken in obeying my Director. I am not absolutely certain that it is the Son of God who appears to me; but I am certain that it is he who speaks to me by my Superiors. If they tell me otherwise than he does, I'l believe them sooner than him, because he commands me so to do.*

(q) *Consid. sur les Festes.* Octob. 15.

MAX.

MAX. II.

We ought to look upon him as our Judge, without examining his reaſons.

'TIs (r) *a Sign of an imperfect Heart, and of a very weak Will, to demurr upon every thing that is enjoyn'd; to exact a reaſon for every thing; to think ill of every precept which we do not know*

(r) Imperfecti cordis eſt, & infirmæ prorſus voluntatis, hærere ad ſingula quæ injunguntur; exigere de quibuſque rationem; & male ſuſpicari de omni præcepto cujus cauſa latuerit; nec unquam libenter obedire, niſi cum audire contigerit quod forte libuerit, aut quod non aliter licere ſeu expedire monſtraverit vel aperta ratio, vel indubitata authoritas.... Non plane hæc eſt illa quæ ex Regula traditur, *Obedientia ſine mora, S. Bern.* lib. de præcep. & diſpen. c. 10.

know the cauſe of; and never to obey willingly, unleſs we hear what pleaſes us, or unleſs the neceſſity or convenience of it, be proved by manifeſt reaſon or by ſome unqueſtionable Authority. This is far from the Obedience which the Rule requires: OBEDIENCE WITHOUT DELAY. (s) *We ought to be Submiſſive and Obedient, without asking any queſtion for Conſcience ſake.* Theſe words of S. *Bernard* are too plain to need any Comment, and therefore I ſhall only endeavour to ſhew the evils which infallibly attend thoſe people, who will never ſubmit to their Confeſſor in any particular difficulty, unleſs he firſt give a ſatisfactory reaſon for it, and convince them by meer dint of Argument.

1. To

(s) Subditi & obedientes eſſe debemus ad nutum Præpoſitorum nihil interrogantes propter conſcientiam. S. *Bern.* Serm. 41. de diverſis.

1. To avoid the fear of an imaginary Sin on the one ſide, they put themſelves evidently into a real danger of Sinning on the other.

2. They affront *Chriſt* himſelf, by rebelling againſt his Government.

3. They wilfully oppoſe the kind deſigns of God's great Mercy to them, in allowing them a Guide.

1. To avoid an imaginary Sin, they put themſelves evidently in a real danger of Sinning. *My Confeſſor*, you'l ſay, *is fallible: How dare I rely upon him?* Pray, are not you fallible too? How dare you rely upon your ſelf? If he miſtake, 'tis his fault: but if you miſtake, 'tis yours. If you depend upon him without examining his reaſons, the danger is only his; But if you are inquiſitive and will depend upon your ſelf, you bring the danger to your own door; and,

if

if there be any miſtake, you are juſtly accountable for it. You may e'en thank your ſelf; You ſought for danger, and you found it; You *loved* it, and who can help your *periſhing* in it?

But am not I to take care, that my Confeſſor be not miſtaken?

Are not you aſhamed to ask ſuch a queſtion? *God* and his *Church* have *both* appointed him to be *your Guide*: And muſt you therefore take upon you to be *his?*

But whilſt my Confeſſor directs me, it were to be wiſht that ſome body would direct him.

That's God's *care.* He himſelf *takes* that upon him, and excuſes you from troubling your head about it. If you cannot help ſuſpecting that your Confeſſor is a bad man, and that therefore God will not direct him:

him: You may make amends for it, by *taking* what *care* you can, to be as good, as you ſhould be, your ſelf: And then (if you humbly deſire it, and heartily pray for it) God will be ſure to direct him for *your* ſake, although he would not do ſo much for *his*. *B. Sales* adviſes you (*t*) *to pray to God with very great inſtance*, and afterwards (*u*) *not to regard him ſimply as a man, nor to truſt in him, nor in his humane Prudence, but in the Providence of Almighty God, who will undoubtedly favour your endeavours, and ſpeak to you by the interpoſition of this man; putting into his mind, and into his mouth, thoſe things which ſhall be moſt expedient for your ſpiritual advancement.* In ſhort, there is nothing more certain, than that God will either *direct* him or *ex-*

(t) *Introd.* p. 1. ch. 4. n. 3.
(u) *ibid.* n. 4.

excuſe you. Be it which way it will, your Soul can never be in danger, upon this account. For, as long as you *cannot ſwear*, your Confeſſor is miſtaken; ſo long you *may* lawfully *ſwear*, you are Secure. S. *Bernard* propoſes the ſame Objection: (*w*) *When matters are doubtful, Men may eaſily deceive themſelves in diſcerning the will of God, and deceive others in preſcribing it.* To which he roundly anſwers, *What's that to you, as long as you are not certain of it?*

II. They affront *Chriſt* himſelf, by rebelling againſt his Government. He gives their Confeſſor a full Commiſſion, to be their *Judge* in all doubtful caſes. They will not acknowledge

(*w*) Sed homines, inquies, facile falli in Dei voluntate de rebus dubiis percipienda, & in præcipienda fallere poſſunt. Sed enim, Quid hoc refert tua, cui conſcius non es? S. *Bern.* lib. de præcep. & diſpen. c. 9.

ledge him, under that character. They'l hearken to him, as to a *Lawyer* at the *Bar*, if he pleaſes: But, as for the *Bench*, they queſtion very much whether he be either *good* enough, or *wiſe* enough, to deſerve that place, ſo well as they do. They'l hear his reaſons, and conſider them: but, when all is done, they are free-born Subjects of the Almighty, and are *always* reſolv'd to *judge* for themſelves. S. *Bernard* ſpeaking of this (*x*) *proud Contempt, and Obſtinate continuance in it*, ſays that *even in little precepts it amounts to more than a little fault, and changes a ſmall tranſgreſſion into a grievous Crime of Rebellion.*

III. They

(*x*) Elatio contemnentis, atque impœnitentis obſtinatio, in minimis quoque mandatis culpam facit non minimam, & convertit in crimen gravis rebellionis culpam ſatis levem ſimplicis tranſgreſſionis. S. *Bern.* ibid. c. 11.

III. They wilfully oppoſe the kind deſigns of God's great Mercy to them, in allowing them a Guide. By giving us a Guide, he puts into our hands the beſt means of ſaving our Souls; he ſupplies us with perpetual opportunities of practiſing the beſt of moral vertues, *Humility* and *Obedience*; he leads us into the beſt and readieſt way of following *Jeſus Chriſt* the *Captain of our Salvation*, who *humbled himſelf* and *became obedient*; for which reaſon *God exalted him*, and will exalt us too, provided we follow his example.

Theſe were the vertues He required from our firſt Parents: and to make the practiſe more eaſy, He was pleaſed to be their Guide himſelf. He was every way Infallible: his infinite Wiſdom on the one ſide, and his no leſs infinite Goodneſs on the other, were Vouchers for his Infallibility:

fallibility: And yet their *Pride* and *Diſobedience* found a way to rob them of their Innocence.

To repair this fault of theirs the *Eternal Truth* becomes Incarnate, the *Word is made Fleſh*, and *dwells amongſt us*: He comes to *enlighten all the World*, and to take care that thoſe, who *follow* him, may never *walk in darkneſs*. And here indeed the terms of our *Obedience* and *Humility* ſeem ſomething harder than before; becauſe we cannot now be ſaved, without ſubmiſſion of our Underſtanding and our Will to *Man* as well as *God*. 'Tis true; this *Man* is *God*, He is infinitely *Wiſe* and *Good*, He is therefore every way *Infallible*. But all theſe great and glorious advantages are Objects far too bright for our weak eyes, we cannot ſee theſe dazling and amazing truths, but are forced to *believe* without *ſeeing*. Here it is,

is, we *humble* our proud thoughts, and captivate them to the *obedience* of *Chriſt*: And 'tis the firſt *Croſs* we *take up*, when we begin to *follow* him.

But yet this is not all: Neither is it juſt that this ſhould be enough. If we intend to be *exalted* we muſt *humble* our ſelves, and be *obedient* one ſtep further. Our parents would not *ſubmit* to *God* himſelf; and we, who have the ſame Blood in our veins, muſt now *ſubmit* not only to *Man* who is *God*, but to Men who are no more Gods than we are; to *Men* who are as fallible as our ſelves. This is the *Croſs* which we muſt of neceſſity *take up*, if we intend to *follow* him. We muſt be thus far *humble* and *obedient*, if we deſign to be *exalted* with him. To *follow* him, we muſt (*y*) *hear his voice*: And, being gone himſelf

(y) *Jo.* 10. 27.

ſo far before us, what could he contrive better for us, than to leave his Miniſters behind him, and to give us all the encouragement that can be, to rely upon their word; by aſſuring us, that *if we* hear them, *we hear* him? 'Tis evidently juſt that this ſame proud and ſtubborn Nature of ours, which once aſpired ſo high as to defy *the Higheſt*, ſhould now bow down its head, not only lower than its Maker, but even lower than the duſt of which he made it. 'Tis juſt, I ſay, in things indifferent, to reſign our Wills, and in doubtful matters, to ſubmit our Underſtandings, even to our fallible fellow creatures who are made of the ſame duſt with us.

'Tis hard indeed, at firſt, for ſo much Pride and Stubbornneſs to yield without ſome little reſiſtance. But however, we are in the hands of a God and a Judge

Judge from whom we cannot make our eſcape, and therefore we have reaſon to be glad to kiſs the Rod, although we are not fond of it. Nay, we have reaſon to be fond of it, if we rightly conſider our intereſt. Our Saviour himſelf was pleaſed to tell us, before he *went*, it was *expedient for us* he ſhould *go away*. For although there may be more Difficulty in ſubmitting to his Miniſters, yet the Benefit of it is incomparably greater. The ſelf-denials of our Underſtanding and our Will are more acceptable to God, when they are offer'd to him in the perſon of a Miniſter who repreſents him. They are more humble, and therefore more acceptable. And here I know not which to admire moſt; the Equity of his Juſtice, in making this the puniſhment of our Sin; or the

Kindneſs of his Mercy, in making it the beſt, the eaſieſt, and the moſt effectual means of purchaſing our Everlaſting Happineſs. Our *Croſs* indeed, is heavier; but the Reward is greater. The occaſions of *taking* it *up*, are more frequent; but they only ſerve to multiply the glories of our *Crown*, when we ſhall, one day, be *exalted* for it.

This is *One* kind deſign, which God has laid in order to our future Happineſs: And *this* we wilfully oppoſe as often as we refuſe to ſubmit, without a particular and a convincing reaſon for it. There is certainly no *Humility* in never ſubmitting, but when our natural Reaſon is convinc'd; nor is there any *Obedience* in never complying, but when we naturally have a mind to it. The very worſt of Atheiſts and Libertines are every

every jot as *humble* and *obedien* as this : They never make any difficulty, of *Believing* what they *ſee*, or *Doing* what they *pleaſe*.

A *Second* deſign of the Divine Providence in allowing us a Guide, is to make us truly Happy, not only *hereafter*, but even *here*. Now this is a double Kindneſs, and the greateſt that can be imagin'd ; that God is not contented to crown our Happineſs at our journey's end, but deſires to give us a taſt of it before hand, and offers us as much of it as we are able to carry with us thither. By leading us into the way of *Blind Obedience*, he removes the cauſes of our inward trouble and diſquiet, and lays a ſure foundation of interiour comfort and tranquillity of mind. And this I ſhall endeavour to give a particular account of, out of pity and compaſſion to thoſe Timo-

rous Conſciences, who make it their great deſign to pleaſe themſelves, but know not how to go about it.

One would admire to ſee the ſtrange perverſneſs and frowardneſs of people, when they are poſſeſs'd with panick fear. Every thing lies croſs in their way. The very ſhadow of an obligation is enough to put them in a fright. What ever it is, they think it morally impoſſible to be comply'd with; and therefore hate the very thought of it. God gives them a *Guide*: and becauſe this looks as if they were oblig'd in Conſcience to follow his direction, therefore they ſtart back, and cry, *what is our Reaſon good for, if in doubts we muſt ſubmit it to our Guide?* And yet, if God had bid them rely entirely upon their *Reaſon*, they would perhaps have thought it the harder meaſure

of

of the two, and would have argued the contrary way, *what is our Guide good for, if we may not ſafely rely upon him?* They would fain be doing their duty; and for fear of doing it the wrong way, they never do it right. They are too wiſe to truſt their Confeſſor; and yet they are not wiſe enough to truſt themſelves. They are deſperately fond of *ſpeculative certainty*: but the miſchief is, it is not to be found. *Probability* ſometimes flatters them with hopes of *abſolute certainty*; but always deceives them, and puts them off with doubtful *if's* and *and's*, which are never able to give them any ſatisfaction. This is the reaſon why they are always fearful, and always inquiſitive to find out reaſons to appeaſe their fears. But after all their vain endeavours to confirm and ſettle their opinion, they can

never attain to a ſteddy and unſhaken perſwaſion of it. Their Conſcience ever and anon recoyls upon them; and all their plauſible reaſoning is ſtill born down and confuted by a ſtrong ſuſpicion which they can never get out of their minds, that perhaps they are ſtill miſtaken.

But that which I moſt admire, is the ſtrange obſtinacy of their humour, who after long experience having felt the ſmart of their miſerable condition, are ſtill reſolved to continue in it. They dayly find themſelves at a loſs: They have all the reaſon in the world to conclude they are in the wrong way: And yet they ſtill go on. A Traveller is wiſer than ſo. As ſoon as he finds himſelf out of the way, he preſently ſtops his courſe, he turns towards the right way with all

all the ſpeed he can, and has not the leaſt inclination to go wrong any further. But the minds of theſe people are ſo hurried away, by their unreaſonable prejudices, that though they find themſelves in the wrong, they cannot endure to return to the right. They expect to ſee an end of all their fears, and then they intend to be as obedient as you pleaſe. Mean time, they beg pardon, if they defer their Obedience till the practiſe of it be a little more eaſy to them. Now this is a fancy which is every jot as extravagant as that of the *Ideot*, who being come to the river ſide, and being obliged to paſs over, durſt not venture in a boat, but reſolv'd to expect till the water was all gone, and left the channel dry. He obſerv'd the ſwiftneſs of the ſtream, and fancied it would ſoon run

quite away, and leave him a free and eaſie paſſage. But the river runs, and ſtill runs on, and though he ſhould expect a thouſand years, 'twould never leave off running. And ſo 'tis in our preſent caſe. Their doubts and jealouſies, their reaſonings and diſputings, will ſtill run on, and never have an end. 'Tis impoſſible they ſhould ever have any tolerable enjoyment of themſelves, or ever be able to ſhake off theſe tormenting fears, but by ſubmitting to the *eaſy yoke* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and by ſecuring themſelves under his protection, whom hitherto they have affronted, by deſpiſing of his Miniſters. Nothing but *Blind Obedience* can free them from all this miſery by removing the cauſes of their inward trouble and diſquiet, and by laying a ſure foundation of interiour comfort and tranquillity of mind. The

The principal cauſe of their inward trouble, is this. They rely entirely upon their own judgment : and therefore have juſt reaſon to conclude, that they are unavoidably accountable for every miſtake they commit. And this is abundantly enough to make them always jealous, that, for ought they know, God's Juſtice may be making towards them, and his Anger levell'd againſt them. But this cauſe ceaſes immediately, as ſoon as they entertain the principles of *Blind obedience* : Becauſe 'tis evident, when God has given them a Confeſſor to direct them, it cannot be his will and pleaſure that this Guide ſhould be directed and guided by them. 'Tis true ; He may be miſtaken : But let him look to that. 'Tis none of their buſineſs to examine him : On the contrary 'tis commendable in them

them to ſubmit (z) *without asking any queſtion for Conſcience ſake.* And therefore, although his miſtakes may perhaps be fatal to himſelf, 'tis as clear as the Meridian Sun, that they can never be fatal to them, nor can they ever be accountable for any thing which he adviſes.

Another more ſecret cauſe of their inward diſquiet, is well expreſs'd by St. *Auſtin*, who ſays, *Thou haſt made us; O Lord, for thy ſelf; and our hearts are always reſtleſs, till we reſt in thee.* All creatures are uneaſy when they are out of their natural Element. Nothing is at reſt, but whilſt it is in that ſtate which Nature intended for it. Obedience is the natural ſtate of the Soul: it was made to obey its Maker: and

(z) S. *Bernard.* ſup.

and the conſtant practice of this Vertue, is the condition to which God deſign'd it. He gave us our Reaſon; not to make us Rebels, but to make us reaſonable Subjects: and therefore all our acts of Submiſſion to the Authority of his Government, are rational and ſuitable to the firſt inſtitution of our Nature. Our Reaſon is a Ray of the Divinity; it imprints the image of our Maker on our Souls; and writes the fundamental laws of our Submiſſion, in ſo plain a character, that though our Paſſions now and then obſcure it, yet they never can efface it. As long as (*a*) *our Souls are ſubject to the higher powers ordain'd by God*; (*b*) *obeying them that rule over us, and ſubmitting our ſelves* to thoſe who *watch for our Souls*;

(a) *Rom.* 13. 1. (b) *Hebr.* 13. 17.

Souls; ſo long our Souls are in their natural temper, and are in very good health, becauſe they are in that State in which they ought to be, according to the primitive intention of their being. But when we *reſiſt the power* of Authority; when we (c) *reſiſt the ordinance of God*; when we revolt againſt the Government of *Jeſus Chriſt*, by deſpiſing the Commiſſion he has given to our Confeſſor, and by refuſing in doubtful caſes to acknowledge the ſufficiency and ſafety of his Direction; then it is that we act contrary to the inward light of our minds, our Conſcience checks us, and makes us uneaſy. And how can we hope to be at eaſe, as long as we have poyſon within us, which puts us in a ſickly and diſeaſed condition?

(c) *Rom.* 13. 2.

condition? Our Pride and Willfulneſs puts all our ſpirits in a continual fermentation. Our minds can never be ſerene, as long as they are clouded with the fumes of our diſtemper. All the common arts of diverſion will never avail us: we may change our place, our poſture, our phyſick, and our Phyſician too; but we ſhall ſtill be reſtleſs, till the cauſe be removed, which creates our diſturbance. (*d*) *There is no peace, ſays my God, to the wicked.* But, as in our body we find an unexpreſſible eaſe and pleaſure, when it is in perfect ſtate of health; So when Obedience corrects the proud and wilful humours of our Soul, reſtores the even temper of our Mind, and ſmooths the way before us; Then it is that all is eaſy to us:

(d) *Iſa.* 57. 21.

us. We eaſily *know* what we are bid to do: And, being humbled, we as *eaſily* do it.

The Obedience, which I ſpeak of, not only removes the cauſes of our inward trouble and diſquiet; but lays a ſure foundation of interiour comfort and tranquillity of mind, by affording us the beſt *Security*, that we can wiſh for, during Life; and the greateſt *Joy*, that we can think of, at the hour of Death. What greater *Security* can our hearts deſire, than to be under the protection of God himſelf, the *Shepherd of our Souls*, who knows a great deal better, than we do, what is good for us, and will not ſuffer us to *go aſtray*, becauſe he loves us better than we love our ſelves? He was our Enemy before; whilſt we rebell'd againſt his Government: But, by deteſting our

our paſt pride and folly, and ſubmitting to his Miniſters, he now becomes our Friend. All Friendſhip is comfortable: but this is the beſt of Friendſhips, and therefore is the greateſt and divineſt comfort. 'Tis a great ſatisfaction, to feel that we our ſelves love God: and a double ſatisfaction, to hope that He himſelf loves us. Then it is, that we may ſay to our Soul, as *David* did, (e) *Return unto thy reſt, O my Soul*; (f) *My God is my Light, and my Salvation*; *Whom ſhall I fear? My God is the Protector of my Life*; *of whom ſhall I be afraid?*

As 'tis our beſt *Security*; during life; ſo 'tis our greateſt *Joy* at the approach of Death, and yields moſt comfort then when we ſtand moſt in need of

(e) *Pſal.* 114. 7. (f) *Pſal.* 26. 1.

of it. 'Tis a terrible thing to a departing Soul, when it looks back upon a proud and wilful courſe of life, which inſtead of being ſpent in the ſervice of God, has been perpetually employ'd in idle reaſoning and diſputing, *how* to ſerve him, *when* to ſerve him, and *whether* to ſerve him *or no.* What can ſuch people plead in their behalf? 'Tis certainly no good excuſe, to ſay, *Lord, we have always been rebellious againſt thy Government; but the reaſon was, becauſe we were afraid to rely upon it; and indeed, we durſt not take thy word for it, becauſe we thought it fitter for us, in all our doubts, to govern our ſelves according to our own fancy. 'Tis true, we have ſeldome or never done our Duty; but we hope thou wilt pleaſe to pardon our wilful omiſſions of it, becauſe we were always ſo mighty*

ty buſy in thinking and conſidering of it, that we could never find time to do it. Here it is their guilty Conſcience lies in wait to accuſe them, and never is more fierce than in the day of adverſity. When Eternity, that terrifying object, at the hour of Death, preſents it ſelf before their thoughts; when they feel themſelves beginning to ſink into the regions of darkneſs; when they are ready to die at the amazing apprehenſion of their final Sentence; How will the Guilt of all their Diſobedience then ſtare them in the face! With what regret and terrour will they then behold it, in its own true ſhape! What tumults and convulſions will it raiſe within their breaſts, when they obſerve a long black train of proud and wilful practices, which very well deſerve to be attended with a longer

and

and a blacker train of everlaſting miſeries!

But it is not ſo with thoſe who have in time repented of their folly, and have proved ſincerely *Humble* and *Obedient*. In their greateſt temptations, all is calm and ſerene within, when there is nothing but darkneſs and clouds about them. All their acts of Submiſſion are ſo many ſeeds of peace and comfort ſown in their Conſciences, which never fail to ſpring up, and flouriſh moſt, when the day of diſtreſs approaches. When the pangs of Death are ready to lay hold of them, and they are juſt going to ſtep into the other World, what a ſeaſonable refreſhment is it to their thoughts, to look back upon an *Humble* and *Obedient* courſe of life? Then it is that the pleaſure of it over-flows their minds, the joys of Heaven begin to ſpring

ſpring up in their hearts, and are a true and ſolid comfort which will ſtick cloſe to them and ſtand faithfully by them in the day of Trial, when they have moſt need of it. O what a Joy it is, to conſider that their greateſt *Friend*, who has been heretofore the *Shepherd of their Souls*, is now the *Judge* of their Actions! to reflect that their *Humility* in *hearing* his *Voice*, and their *Obedience* in *following* it, are the certain marks by which he *knows* the happy number of *his Sheep!* and to remember that he will not fail to *ſet them on his right hand*, when he *comes in glory* to pronounce the Sentence of their Everlaſting Happineſs! To *hear his Voice* was once the *Security* of their life: And to *hear* the *ſame*, is now the *Joy* of their death. *My Sheep*, ſays he, *hear my Voice, and they follow me: and I give unto them Eternal*

Eternal Life : and they ſhall not periſh for ever. Come ye Bleſſed of my Father; Come and *inherit the Kingdom, which was prepared for you, from the foundation of the World.* Amen.

F I N I S.